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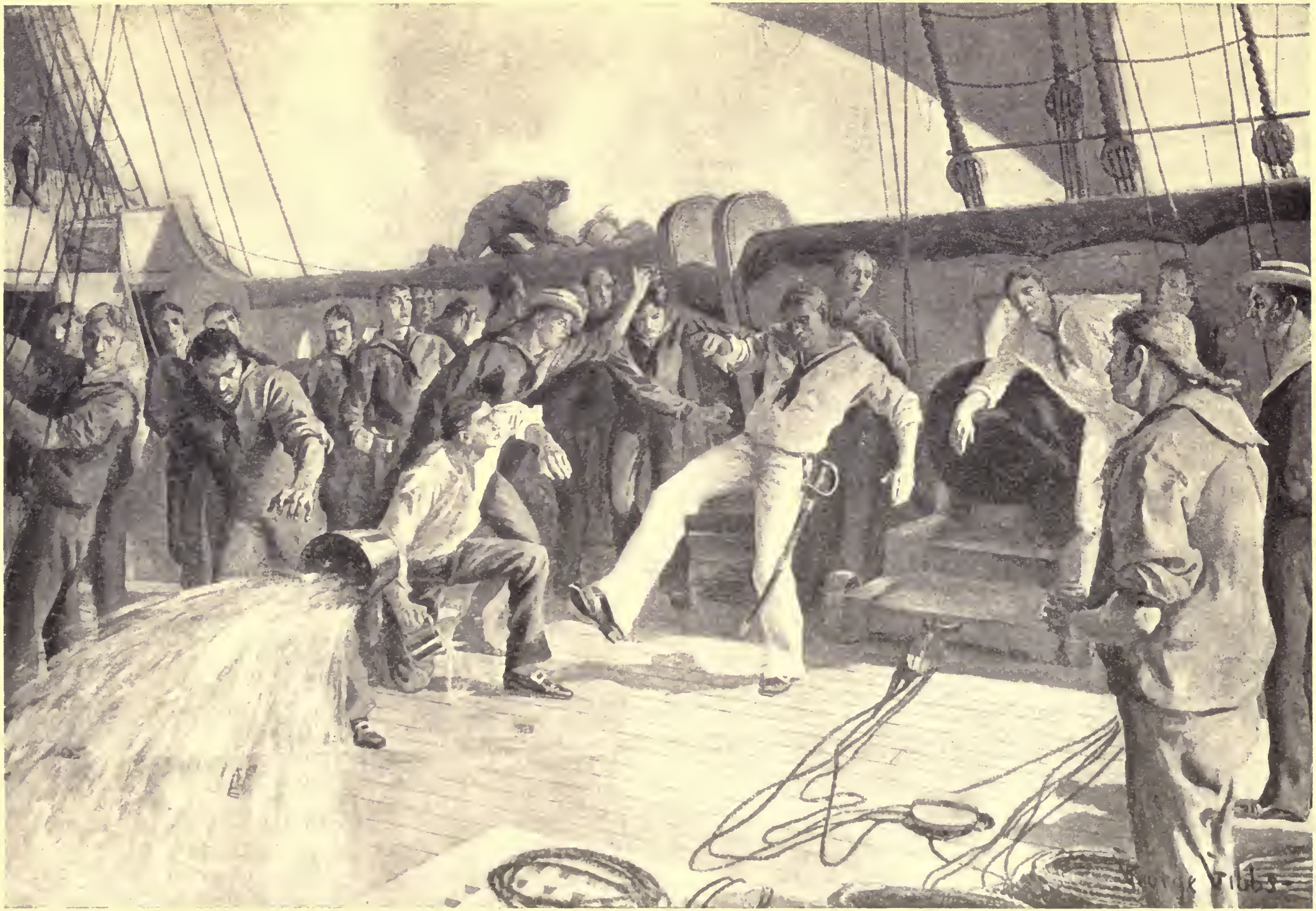

SPILLING GROG ON THE "CONSTITUTION" BEFORE GOING INTO ACTION

THE NAVAL HISTORY

OF THE

UNITED STATES

BY

WILLIS J. ABBOT

With Many Illustrations

VOLUME ONE

New York :
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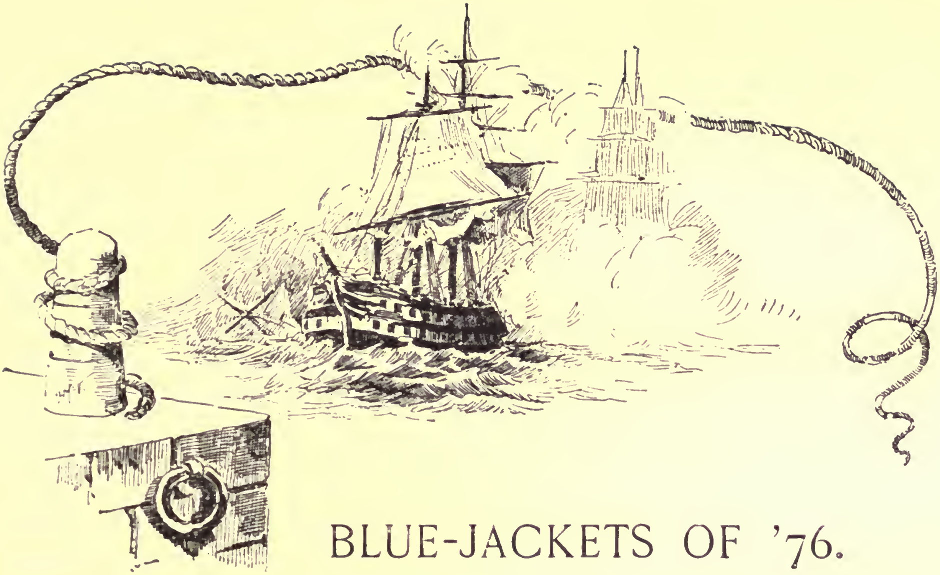
PART I

BLUE JACKETS OF '76



BLUE-JACKETS OF '76.

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EARLY EXPLOITS UPON THE WATER. — GALLOP'S BATTLE WITH THE INDIANS. — BUCCANEERS AND PIRATES. — MORGAN AND BLACKBEARD. — CAPT. KIDD TURNS PIRATE. — DOWNFALL OF THE BUCCANEERS' POWER.

IN MAY, 1636, a stanch little sloop of some twenty tons was standing along Long Island Sound on a trading expedition. At her helm stood John Gallop, a sturdy colonist, and a skilful seaman, who earned his bread by trading with the Indians that at that time thronged the shores of the Sound, and eagerly seized any opportunity to traffic with the white men from the colonies of Plymouth or New Amsterdam. The colonists sent out beads, knives, bright clothes, and sometimes, unfortunately, rum and other strong drinks. The Indians in exchange offered skins and peltries of all kinds; and, as their simple natures had not been schooled to nice calculations of values, the traffic was one of great profit to the more shrewd whites. But the trade was not without its perils. Though the Indians were simple, and little likely to drive hard bargains, yet they were savages, and little accustomed to nice distinctions between their own property and that of others. Their desires once aroused for some gaudy bit of cloth or shining glass, they were ready enough to steal it, often making their booty secure by the murder of the luckless trader. It so happened, that, just before John Gallop set out with his sloop on the spring trading cruise, the people of the colony were excitedly discussing the probable fate of one Oldham, who some weeks before had set out on a like errand, in a pinnace, with a crew of two white boys and two Indians, and had never returned. So when, on this May morning, Gallop, being forced to hug the shore by stormy weather, saw a small vessel lying at anchor in a cove, he immediately ran down nearer, to investigate. The crew of the sloop numbered two men and two boys, beside the skipper, Gallop. Some heavy duck-guns on board were no mean ordnance; and the New Englander determined to probe the mystery of Oldham's disappearance, though it might require some fighting. As the sloop bore down upon the anchored pinnace, Gallop found no lack of signs to arouse his suspicion. The rigging of the strange craft was loose, and seemed to have been cut. No lookout was visible, and she seemed to have been deserted; but a nearer view showed, lying on the deck of the pinnace, fourteen stalwart Indians, one of whom, catching sight of the approaching sloop, cut the anchor cable, and called to his companions to awake.

This action on the part of the Indians left Gallop no doubt as to their character. Evidently they had captured the pinnace, and had either murdered Oldham, or even then had him a prisoner in their midst. The daring sailor wasted no time in debate as to the proper course to pursue, but clapping all sail on his craft, soon brought her alongside the pinnace. As the sloop came up, the Indians opened the fight with fire-arms and spears; but Gallop's crew responded with their duck-guns with such vigor that the Indians deserted the decks, and fled below for shelter. Gallop was then in a quandary. The odds against him were too great for him to dare to board, and the pinnace was rapidly drifting ashore. After some deliberation he put up his helm, and beat to windward of the pinnace; then, coming about, came scudding down upon her before the wind. The two vessels met with a tremendous shock. The bow of the sloop struck the pinnace fairly amidships, forcing her over on her beam-ends, until the water poured into the open hatchway. The affrighted

Indians, unused to warfare on the water, rushed upon deck. Six leaped into the sea, and were drowned; the rest retreated again into the cabin. Gallop then prepared to repeat his ramming manœuvre. This time, to make the blow more effective, he lashed his anchor to the bow, so that the sharp flukes protruded; thus extemporizing an iron-clad ram more than two hundred years before naval men thought of using one. Thus provided, the second blow of the sloop was more terrible than the first. The sharp fluke of the anchor crashed through the side of the pinnace, and the two vessels hung tightly together. Gallop then began to double-load his duck-guns, and fire through the sides of the pinnace; but, finding that the enemy was not to be dislodged in this way, he broke his vessel loose, and again made for the windward, preparatory to a third blow. As the sloop drew off, four or five more Indians rushed from the cabin of the pinnace, and leaped overboard, but shared the fate of their predecessors, being far from land. Gallop then came about, and for the third time bore down upon his adversary. As he drew near, an Indian appeared on the deck of the pinnace, and with humble gestures offered to submit. Gallop ran alongside, and taking the man on board, bound him hand and foot, and placed him in the hold. A second redskin then begged for quarter; but Gallop, fearing to allow the two wily savages to be together, cast the second into the sea, where he was drowned. Gallop then boarded the pinnace. Two Indians were left, who retreated into a small compartment of the hold, and were left unmolested. In the cabin was found the mangled body of Mr. Oldham. A tomahawk had been sunk deep into his skull, and his body was covered with wounds. The floor of the cabin was littered with portions of the cargo, which the murderous savages had plundered. Taking all that remained of value upon his own craft, Gallop cut loose the pinnace; and she drifted away, to go to pieces on a reef in Narragansett Bay.

This combat is the earliest action upon American waters of which we have any trustworthy records. The only naval event antedating this was the expedition from Virginia, under Capt. Samuel Argal, against the little French settlement of San Sauveur. Indeed, had it not been for the pirates and the neighboring French settlements, there would be little in the early history of the American Colonies to attract the lover of naval history. But about 1645 the buccaneers began to commit depredations on the high seas, and it became necessary for the Colonies to take steps for the protection of their commerce. In this year an eighteen-gun ship from Cambridge, Mass., fell in with a Barbary pirate of twenty guns, and was hard put to it to escape. And, as the seventeenth century drew near its close, these pests of the sea so increased, that evil was sure to befall the peaceful merchantman that put to sea without due preparation for a fight or two with the sea robbers.

It was in the low-lying islands of the Gulf of Mexico, that these predatory gentry — buccaneers, marooners, or pirates — made their headquarters, and lay in wait for the richly freighted merchantmen in the West India trade. Men of all nationalities sailed under the "Jolly Roger," — as the dread black flag with skull and cross-bones was called, — but chiefly were they French and Spaniards. The continual wars that in that turbulent time racked Europe gave to the marauders of the sea a specious excuse for their occupation. Thus, many a Spanish schooner, manned by a swarthy crew bent on plunder, commenced her career on the Spanish Main, with the intention of taking only ships belonging to France and England; but let a richly laden Spanish galleon appear, after a long season of ill-fortune, and all scruples were thrown aside, the "Jolly Roger" sent merrily to the fore, and another pirate was added to the list of those that made the highways of the sea as dangerous to travel as the footpad infested common of Hounslow Heath. English ships went out to hunt down the treacherous Spaniards, and stayed to rob and pillage indiscriminately; and not a few of the names now honored as those of eminent English discoverers, were once dreaded as being borne by merciless pirates.

But the most powerful of the buccaneers on the Spanish Main were French, and between them and the Spaniards an unceasing warfare was waged. There were desperate men on either side, and mighty stories are told of their deeds of valor. There were Pierre François, who, with six and twenty desperadoes, dashed into the heart of a Spanish fleet, and captured the admiral's flag-ship; Bartholomew Portuguese, who, with thirty men, made repeated attacks upon a great Indiaman with a crew of seventy, and though beaten back time and again, persisted until the crew surrendered to the twenty buccaneers left alive; François l'Olonoise, who sacked the cities of Maracaibo and Gibraltar, and who, on hearing that a man-o'-war had been sent to drive him away, went boldly to meet her, captured her, and slaughtered all of the crew save one, whom he sent to bear the bloody tidings to the governor of Havana.

Such were the buccaneers, — desperate, merciless, and insatiate in their lust for plunder. So numerous did they finally become, that no merchant dared to send a ship to the West Indies; and the pirates, finding that they had fairly exterminated their game, were fain to turn landwards for further booty. It was an Englishman that showed the sea rovers this new plan of pillage; one Louis Scott, who descended upon the town of Campeche, and, after stripping the place to the bare walls, demanded that a heavy tribute be paid him, in default of which he would burn the town. Loaded with booty, he sailed back to the buccaneers' haunts in the Tortugas. This expedition was the example that the buccaneers followed for the next few years. City after city fell a prey to the demoniac attacks of the lawless rovers. Houses and churches were sacked, towns given to the flames, rich and poor plundered alike; murder was rampant; and men and women were subjected to the most horrid tortures, to extort information as to buried treasures.

Two great names stand out pre-eminent amid the host of outlaws that took part in this reign of rapine, — l'Olonoise and Sir Henry Morgan. The desperate exploits of these two worthies would, if recounted, fill volumes; and probably no more extraordinary narrative of cruelty, courage, suffering, and barbaric luxury could be fabricated. Morgan was a Welshman, an emigrant, who, having worked out as a slave the cost of his passage across the ocean, took immediate advantage of his freedom to take up the trade of piracy. For him was no pillaging of paltry merchant-ships. He demanded grander operations, and his bands of desperadoes assumed the proportions of armies. Many were the towns that suffered from the bloody visitations of Morgan and his men. Puerto del Principe yielded up to them three hundred thousand pieces of eight, five hundred head of cattle, and many prisoners. Porto Bello was bravely defended against the barbarians; and the stubbornness of the defence so enraged Morgan, that he swore that no quarter should be given the defenders. And so when some hours later the chief fortress surrendered, the merciless buccaneer locked its garrison in the guard-room, set a torch to the magazine, and sent castle and garrison flying into the air. Maracaibo and Gibraltar next fell into the clutches of the pirate. At the latter town, finding himself caught in a river with three men-of-war anchored at its mouth, he hastily built a fire-ship, put some desperate men at the helm, and sent her, a sheet of flame, into the midst of the squadron. The admiral's ship was destroyed; and the pirates sailed away, exulting over their adversaries' discomfiture. Rejoicing over their victories, the followers of Morgan then planned a venture that should eclipse all that had gone before. This was no less than a descent upon Panama, the most powerful of the West Indian cities. For this undertaking, Morgan gathered around him an army of over two thousand desperadoes of all nationalities. A little village on the island of Hispaniola was chosen as the recruiting station; and thither flocked pirates, thieves, and adventurers from all parts of the world. It was a motley crew thus gathered together, — Spaniards, swarthy skinned and black haired; wiry Frenchmen, quick to anger, and ever ready with cutlass or pistol; Malays and Lascars, half clad in gaudy colors, treacherous and sullen, with a hand ever on their glittering creeses; Englishmen, handy alike with fist, bludgeon, or cutlass, and mightily given to fearful oaths; negroes, Moors, and a few West Indians mixed with the lawless throng.

Having gathered his band, procured provisions (chiefly by plundering), and built a fleet of boats, Morgan put his forces in motion. The first obstacle in his path was the Castle of Chagres, which guarded the mouth of the Chagres River, up which the buccaneers must pass to reach the city of Panama. To capture this fortress, Morgan sent his vice-admiral Bradley, with four hundred men. The Spaniards were evidently warned of their approach; for hardly had the first ship flying the piratical ensign appeared at the mouth of the river, when the royal standard of Spain was hoisted above the castle, and the dull report of a shotted gun told the pirates that there was a stubborn resistance in store for them.

Landing some miles below the castle, and cutting their way with hatchet and sabre through the densely interwoven vegetation of a tropical jungle, the pirates at last reached a spot from which a clear view of the castle could be obtained. As they emerged from the forest to the open, the sight greatly disheartened them. They saw a powerful fort, with bastions, moat, drawbridge, and precipitous natural defences. Many of the pirates advised a retreat; but Bradley, dreading the anger of Morgan, ordered an assault. Time after time did the desperate buccaneers, with horrid yells, rush upon the fort, only to be beaten back by the well-directed volleys of the garrison. They charged up to the very walls, threw over fireballs, and hacked the timbers with axes, but to no avail. From behind their impregnable ramparts, the Spaniards fired murderous volleys, crying out, —

"Come on, you English devils, you heretics, the enemies of God and of the king! Let your comrades who are behind come also. We will serve them as we have served you. You shall not get to Panama this time."

As night fell, the pirates withdrew into the thickets to escape the fire of their enemies, and to discuss their discomfiture. As one group of buccaneers lay in the jungle, a chance arrow, shot by an Indian in the fort, struck one of them in the arm. Springing to his feet with a cry of rage and pain, the wounded man cried out as he tore the arrow from the bleeding wound, —

"Look here, my comrades. I will make this accursed arrow the means of the destruction of all the Spaniards."

So saying, he wrapped a quantity of cotton about the head of the arrow, charged his gun with powder, and, thrusting the arrow into the muzzle, fired. His comrades eagerly watched the flight of the missile, which was easily traced by the flaming cotton. Hurtling through the air, the fiery missile fell upon a thatched roof within the castle, and the dry straw and leaves were instantly in a blaze. With cries of savage joy, the buccaneers ran about picking up the arrows that lay scattered over the battle-field. Soon the air was full of the firebrands, and the woodwork within the castle enclosure was a mass of flame. One arrow fell within the magazine; and a burst of smoke and flame, and the dull roar of an explosion, followed. The Spaniards worked valiantly to extinguish the flames, and to beat back their assailants; but the fire raged beyond their control, and the bright light made them easy targets for their foes. There could be but one issue to such a conflict. By morning the fort was in the hands of the buccaneers, and of the garrison of three hundred and fourteen only fourteen were unhurt. Over the ruins of the fort the English flag was hoisted, the shattered walls were repaired, and the place made a rendezvous for Morgan's forces.

On the scene of the battle Morgan drilled his forces, and prepared for the march and battles that were to come. After some days' preparation, the expedition set out. The road lay through tangled tropical forests, under a burning sun. Little food was taken, as the invaders expected to live on the country; but the inhabitants fled before the advancing column, destroying every thing eatable. Soon starvation stared the desperadoes in the face. They fed upon berries, roots, and leaves. As the days passed, and no food was to be found, they sliced up and devoured coarse leather bags. For a time, it seemed that they would never escape alive from the jungle; but at last, weak, weary, and emaciated, they came out upon a grassy plain before the city of Panama. Here, a few days later, a great battle was fought. The Spaniards outnumbered the invaders, and were better provided with munitions of war; yet the pirates, fighting with the bravery of desperate men, were victorious, and the city fell into their hands. Then followed days of murder, plunder, and debauchery. Morgan saw his followers, maddened by liquor, scoff at the idea of discipline and obedience. Fearing that while his men were helplessly drunk the Spaniards would rally and cut them to pieces, he set fire to the city, that the stores of rum might be destroyed. After sacking the town, the vandals packed their plunder on the backs of mules, and retraced their steps to the seaboard. Their booty amounted to over two millions of dollars. Over the division of this enormous sum great dissensions arose, and Morgan saw the mutinous spirit spreading rapidly among his men. With a few accomplices, therefore, he loaded a ship with the plunder, and secretly set sail; leaving over half of his band, without food or shelter, in a hostile country. Many of the abandoned buccaneers starved, some were shot or hanged by the enraged Spaniards; but the leader of the rapacious gang reached Jamaica with a huge fortune, and was appointed governor of the island, and made a baronet by the reigning king of England, Charles the Second.

Such were some of the exploits of some of the more notorious of the buccaneers. It may be readily imagined, that, with hordes of desperadoes such as these infesting the waters of the West Indies, there was little opportunity for the American Colonies to build up any maritime interests in that direction. And as the merchantmen became scarce on the Spanish Main, such of the buccaneers as did not turn landward in search of booty put out to sea, and ravaged the ocean pathways between the Colonies and England. It was against these pirates, that the earliest naval operations of the Colonies were directed. Several cruisers were fitted out to rid the seas of these pests, but we hear little of their success. But the name of one officer sent against the pirates has become notorious as that of the worst villain of them all.

It was in January, 1665, that William III., King of England, issued "to our true and well-beloved Capt. William Kidd, commander of the ship 'Adventure,'" a commission to proceed against "divers wicked persons who commit many and great piracies, robberies, and depredations on the seas." Kidd was a merchant of New York, and had commanded a privateer during the last war with France. He was a man of great courage, and, being provided with a stanch ship and brave crew, set out with high hopes of winning great reputation and much prize money. But fortune was against him. For months the "Adventure" ploughed the blue waves of the ocean, yet not a sail appeared on the horizon. Once, indeed, three ships were seen in the distance. The men of the "Adventure" were overjoyed at the prospect of a rich prize, The ship was prepared for action. The men, stripped to the waist, stood at their quarters, talking of the coming battle. Kidd stood in the rigging with a spy-glass, eagerly examining the distant vessels. But only disappointment was in store; for, as the ships drew nearer, Kidd shut his spy-glass with an oath, saying, —

"They are only three English men o'-war."

Continued disappointment bred discontent and mutiny among the crew. They had been enlisted with lavish promises of prize money, but saw before them nothing but a profitless cruise. The spirit of discontent spread rapidly. Three or four ships that were sighted proved to be neither pirates nor French, and were therefore beyond the powers of capture granted Kidd by the king. Kidd fought against the growing piratical sentiment for a long time; but temptation at last overcame him, and he yielded. Near the Straits of Babelmandeb, at the entrance to the Red Sea, he landed a party, plundered the adjoining country for provisions, and, turning his ship's prow toward the straits, mustered his crew on deck, and thus addressed them: —

"We have been unsuccessful hitherto, my boys," he said, "but take courage. Fortune is now about to smile upon us. The fleet of the 'Great Mogul,' freighted with the richest treasures, is soon to come out of the Red Sea. From the capture of those heavily laden ships, we will all grow rich."

The crew, ready enough to become pirates, cheered lustily : and, turning his back upon all hopes of an honorable career, Kidd set out in search of the treasure fleet. After cruising for four days, the "Adventure" fell in with the squadron, which proved to be under convoy of an English and a Dutch man-of-war. The squadron was a large one, and the ships greatly scattered. By skilful seamanship, Kidd dashed down upon an outlying vessel, hoping to capture and plunder it before the convoying men-of-war could come to its rescue. But his first shot attracted the attention of the watchful guardians; and, though several miles away, they packed on all sail, and bore down to the rescue with such spirit that the disappointed pirate was forced to sheer off. Kidd was now desperate. He had failed as a reputable privateer, and his first attempt at piracy had failed. Thenceforward, he cast aside all scruples, and captured large ships and small, tortured their crews, and for a time seemed resolved to lead a piratical life. But there are evidences that at times this strange man relented, and strove to return to the path of duty and right. On one occasion, a Dutch ship crossed the path of the "Adventure," and the crew clamorously demanded her capture. Kidd firmly refused. A tumult arose. The captain drew his sabre and pistols, and gathering about him those still faithful, addressed the mutineers, saying, —

"You may take the boats and go. But those who thus leave this ship will never ascend its sides again."

The mutineers murmured loudly. One man, a gunner, named William Moore, stepped forward, saying, —

"You are ruining us all. You are keeping us in beggary and starvation. But for your whims, we might all be prosperous and rich."

At this outspoken mutiny, Kidd flew into a passion. Seizing a heavy bucket that stood near, he dealt Moore a terrible blow on the head. The unhappy man fell to the deck with a fractured skull, and the other mutineers sullenly yielded to the captain's will. Moore died the next day; and months after, when Kidd, after roving the seas, and robbing ships of every nationality, was brought to trial at London, it was for the murder of William Moore that he was condemned to die. For Kidd's career subsequent to the incident of the Dutch ship was that of a hardened pirate. He captured and robbed ships, and tortured their passengers. He went to Madagascar, the rendezvous of the pirates, and joined in their revelry and debauchery. On the island were five or six hundred pirates, and ships flying the black flag were continually arriving or departing. The streets resounded with shouts of revelry, with curses, and with the cries of rage. Strong drinks were freely used. Drunkenness was everywhere. It was no uncommon thing for a hogshead of wine to be opened, and left standing in the streets, that any might drink who chose. The pirates, flush with their ill-gotten gains, spent money on gambling and kindred vices lavishly. The women who accompanied them to this lawless place were decked out with barbaric splendor in silks and jewels. On the arrival of a ship, the debauchery was unbounded. Such noted pirates as Blackbeard, Steed Bonnet, and Avary made the place their rendezvous, and brought thither their rich prizes and wretched prisoners. Blackbeard was one of the most desperate pirates of the age. He, with part of his crew, once terrorized the officials of Charleston, S.C., exacting tribute of medicines and provisions. Finally he was killed in action, and sixteen of his desperate gang expiated their crimes on the gallows.

To Madagascar, too, often came the two female pirates, Mary Read and Anne Bonny. These women, masquerading in men's clothing, were as desperate and bloody as the men by whose side they fought. By a strange coincidence, these two women enlisted on the same ship. Each knowing her own sex, and being ignorant of that of the other, they fell in love; and the final discovery of their mutual deception increased their intimacy. After serving with the pirates, working at the guns, swinging a cutlass in the boarding parties, and fighting a duel in which she killed her opponent, Mary Read determined to escape. There is every evidence that she wearied of the evil life she was leading, and was determined to quit it; but, before she could carry her intentions into effect, the ship on which she served was captured, and taken to England, where the pirates expiated their crimes on the gallows, Mary Read dying in prison before the day set for her execution.

After some months spent in licentious revelry at Madagascar, Kidd set out on a further cruise. During this voyage he learned that he had been proscribed as a pirate, and a price set on his head. Strange as it may appear, this news was a surprise to him. He seems to have deceived himself into thinking that his acts of piracy were simply the legitimate work of a privateersman. For a time he knew not what to do; but as by this time the coarse pleasures of an outlaw's life were distasteful to him, he determined to proceed to New York, and endeavor to prove himself an honest man. This determination proved to be an unfortunate one for him; for hardly had he arrived, when he was taken into custody, and sent to England for trial. He made an able defence, but was found guilty, and sentenced to be hanged; a sentence which was executed some months later, in the presence of a vast multitude of people, who applauded in the death of Kidd the end of the reign of outlaws upon the ocean.

IN THE NAME
OF
GREAT BRITAIN.

CHAPTER II.

EXPEDITIONS AGAINST NEIGHBORING COLONIES. — ROMANTIC CAREER OF SIR WILLIAM PHIPPS. — QUELLING A MUTINY. — EXPEDITIONS AGAINST QUEBEC.

WHILE it was chiefly in expeditions against the buccaneers, or in the defence of merchantmen against these predatory gentry, that the American colonists gained their experience in naval warfare, there were, nevertheless, some few naval expeditions fitted out by the colonists against the forces of a hostile government. Both to the north and south lay the territory of France and Spain, — England's traditional enemies; and so soon as the colonies began to give evidence of their value to the mother country, so soon were they dragged into the quarrels in which the haughty mistress of the seas was ever plunged. Of the southern colonies, South Carolina was continually embroiled with Spain, owing to the conviction of the Spanish that the boundaries of Florida — at that time a Spanish colony — included the greater part of the Carolinas. For the purpose of enforcing this idea, the Spaniards, in 1706, fitted out an expedition of four ships-of-war and a galley, which, under the command of a celebrated French admiral, was despatched to take Charleston. The people of Charleston were in no whit daunted, and on the receipt of the news of the expedition began preparations for resistance. They had no naval vessels; but several large merchantmen, being in port, were hastily provided with batteries, and a large galley was converted into a flag-ship. Having no trained naval officers, the command of the improvised squadron was tendered to a certain Lieut.-Col. Rhett, who possessed the confidence of the colonists. Rhett accepted the command; and when the attacking party cast anchor some miles below the city, and landed their shore forces, he weighed anchor, and set out to attack them. But the Spaniards avoided the conflict, and fled out to sea, leaving their land forces to bear the brunt of battle. In this action, more than half of the invaders were killed or taken prisoners. Some days later, one of the Spanish vessels, having been separated from her consorts, was discovered by Rhett, who attacked her, and after a sharp fight captured her, bringing her with ninety prisoners to Charleston.

But it was chiefly in expeditions against the French colonies to the northward that the naval strength of the English colonies was exerted. Particularly were the colonies of Port Royal, in Acadia, and the French stronghold of Quebec coveted by the British, and they proved fertile sources of contention in the opening years of the eighteenth century. Although the movement for the capture of these colonies was incited by the ruling authorities of Great Britain, its execution was left largely to the colonists. One of the earliest of these expeditions was that which sailed from Nantasket, near Boston, in April, 1690, bound for the conquest of Port Royal.

This expedition was under the command of Sir William Phipps, a sturdy colonist, whose life was not devoid of romantic episodes. Though his ambitions were of the lowliest, — his dearest wish being "to command a king's ship, and own a fair brick house in the Green Lane of North Boston," — he managed to win for himself no small amount of fame and respect in the colonies. His first achievement was characteristic of that time, when Spanish galleons, freighted with golden ingots, still sailed the seas, when pirates buried their booty, and when the treasures carried down in sunken ships were not brought up the next day by divers clad in patented submarine armor. From a weather-beaten old seaman, with whom he became acquainted while pursuing his trade of ship-carpentering, Phipps learned of a sunken wreck lying on the sandy bottom many fathoms beneath the blue surface of the Gulf of Mexico. The vessel had gone down fifty years before, and had carried with her great store of gold and silver, which she was carrying from the rich mines of Central and South America to the Court of Spain. Phipps, laboriously toiling with adze and saw in his ship-yard, listened to the story of the sailor, his blood coursing quicker in his veins, and his ambition for wealth and position aroused to its fullest extent. Here, then, thought he, was the opportunity of a lifetime. Could he but recover the treasures carried down with the sunken ship, he would have wealth and position in the colony. With these two allies at his command, the task of securing a command in the king's navy would be an easy one. But to seek out the sunken treasure required a ship and seamen. Clearly his own slender means could never meet the demands of so great an undertaking. Therefore, gathering together all his small savings, William Phipps set sail for England, in the hopes of interesting capitalists there in his scheme. By dint of indomitable persistence, the unknown American ship-carpenter managed to secure the influence of certain officials of high station in England, and finally managed to get the assistance of the British admiralty. A frigate, fully manned, was given him, and he set sail for the West Indies.

Once arrived in the waters of the Spanish Main, he began his search. Cruising about the spot indicated by his seafaring informant as the location of the sunken vessel, sounding and dredging occupied the time of the treasure-seekers for months. The crew, wearying of the fruitless search, began to murmur, and signs of mutiny were rife. Phipps, filled with thoughts of the treasure for which he sought, saw not at all the lowering looks, nor heard the half-uttered threats, of the crew as he passed them. But finally the mutiny so developed that he could no longer ignore its existence.

It was then the era of the buccaneers. Doubtless some of the crew had visited the outlaws' rendezvous at New Providence, and had told their comrades of the revelry and ease in which the sea robbers spent their days. And so it happened that one day, as Phipps stood on the quarter-deck vainly trying to choke down the nameless fear that had begun to oppress him, — the fear that his life's venture had proved a failure, — his crew came crowding aft, armed to the teeth, and loudly demanded that the captain should abandon his foolish search, and lead them on a fearless buccaneering cruise along the Spanish Main. The mutiny was one which might well have dismayed the boldest sea captain. The men were desperate, and well armed. Phipps was almost without support; for his officers, by their irresolute and timid demeanor, gave him little assurance of aid.

Standing on the quarter-deck, Phipps listened impatiently to the complaints of the mutineers; but, when their spokesman called upon him to lead them upon a piratical cruise, he lost all control of himself, and, throwing all prudence to the winds, sprung into the midst of the malcontents, and laid about him right manfully with his bare fists. The mutineers were all well armed, but seemed loath to use their weapons; and the captain, a tall, powerful man, soon awed them all into submission.

Though he showed indomitable energy in overcoming obstacles, Phipps was not destined to discover the object of his search at this time; and, after several months' cruising, he was forced, by the leaky condition of his vessel, to abandon the search. But, before leaving the waters of the Spanish Main, he obtained enough information to convince him that his plan was a practicable one, and no mere visionary scheme. On reaching England, he went at once to some wealthy noblemen, and, laying before them all the facts in his possession, so interested them in the project that they readily agreed to supply him with a fresh outfit. After a few weeks spent in organizing his expedition, the treasure-seeker was again on the ocean, making his way toward the Mexican Gulf. This time his search was successful, and a few days' work with divers and dredges about the sunken ship brought to light bullion and specie to the amount of more than a million and a half dollars. As his ill success in the first expedition had embroiled him with his crew, so his good fortune this time aroused the cupidity of the sailors. Vague rumors of plotting against his life reached the ears of Phipps. Examining further into the matter, he learned that the crew was plotting to seize the vessel, divide the treasure, and set out upon a buccaneering cruise. Alarmed at this intelligence, Phipps strove to conciliate the seamen by offering them a share of the treasure. Each man should receive a portion, he promised, even if he himself had to pay it. The men agreed to this proposition; and so well did Phipps keep his word with them on returning to England, that, of the whole treasure, only about eighty thousand dollars remained to him as his share. This, however, was an ample fortune for those times; and with it Phipps returned to Boston, and began to devote himself to the task of securing a command in the royal navy.

His first opportunity to distinguish himself came in the expedition of 1690 against Port Royal. Throughout the wars between France and England, the French settlement of Port Royal had been a thorn in the flesh of Massachusetts. From Port Royal, the trim-built speedy French privateers put to sea, and seldom returned without bringing in their wake some captured coaster or luckless fisherman hailing from the colony of the Puritans. When the depredations of the privateers became unbearable, Massachusetts bestirred herself, and the doughty Phipps was sent with an expedition to reduce their unneighborly neighbor to subjection. Seven vessels and two hundred and eighty-eight men were put under the command of the lucky treasure-hunter. The expedition was devoid of exciting or novel features. Port Royal was reached without disaster, and the governor surrendered with a promptitude which should have won immunity for the people of the village. But the Massachusetts sailors had not undertaken the enterprise for glory alone, and they plundered the town before taking to their ships again.

This expedition, however, was but an unimportant incident in the naval annals of the colonies. It was followed quickly by an expedition of much graver importance.

When Phipps returned after capturing and plundering Port Royal, he found Boston vastly excited over the preparations for an expedition against Quebec. The colony was in no condition to undertake the work of conquest. Prolonged Indian wars had greatly depleted its treasury. Vainly it appealed to England for aid, but, receiving no encouragement, sturdily determined to undertake the expedition unaided. Sailors were pressed from the merchant-shipping. Trained bands, as the militia of that day was called, drilled in the streets, and on the common. Subscription papers were being circulated; and vessel owners were blandly given the choice between voluntarily loaning their vessels to the colony, or having them peremptorily seized. In this way a fleet of thirty-two vessels had been collected; the largest of which was a ship called the "Six

Friends," built for the West India trade, and carrying forty-four guns. This armada was manned by seamen picked up by a press so vigorous, that Gloucester, the chief seafaring town of the colony, was robbed of two-thirds of its men. Hardly had Capt. Phipps, flushed with victory, returned from his Port Royal expedition, when he was given command of the armada destined for the capture of Quebec.

Early in August the flotilla set sail from Boston Harbor. The day was clear and warm, with a light breeze blowing. From his flag-ship Phipps gave the signal for weighing anchor, and soon the decks of the vessels thickly strewn about the harbor resounded to the tread of men about the capstan. Thirty-two vessels of the squadron floated lightly on the calm waters of the bay; and darting in and out among them were light craft carrying pleasure-seekers who had come down to witness the sailing of the fleet, friends and relatives of the sailors who were there to say farewell, and the civic dignitaries who came to wish the expedition success. One by one the vessels beat their way down the bay, and, rounding the dangerous reef at the mouth of the harbor, laid their course to the northward. It was a motley fleet of vessels. The "Six Brothers" led the way, followed by brigs, schooners, and many sloop-rigged fishing-smacks. With so ill-assorted a flotilla, it was impossible to keep any definite sailing order. The first night scattered the vessels far and wide, and thenceforward the squadron was not united until it again came to anchor just above the mouth of the St. Lawrence. It seemed as though the very elements had combined against the voyagers. Though looking for summer weather, they encountered the bitter gales of November. Only after they had all safely entered the St. Lawrence, and were beyond injury from the storms, did the gales cease. They had suffered all the injury that tempestuous weather could do them, and they then had to chafe under the enforced restraints of a calm.

Phipps had rallied his scattered fleet, and had proceeded up the great river of the North to within three days' sail of Quebec, when the calm overtook him. On the way up the river he had captured two French luggers, and learned from his prisoners that Quebec was poorly fortified, that the cannon on the redoubts were dismounted, and that hardly two hundred men could be rallied to its defence. Highly elated at this, the Massachusetts admiral pressed forward. He anticipated that Quebec, like Port Royal, would surrender without striking a blow. Visions of high honors, and perhaps even a commission in the royal navy, floated across his brain. And while thus hurrying forward his fleet, drilling his men, and building his air-castles, his further progress was stopped by a dead calm which lasted three weeks.

How fatal to his hopes that calm was, Phipps, perhaps, never knew. The information he had wrung from his French prisoners was absolutely correct. Quebec at that time was helpless, and virtually at his mercy. But, while the Massachusetts armada lay idly floating on the unruffled bosom of the river, a man was hastening towards Quebec whose timely arrival meant the salvation of the French citadel.

This man was Frontenac, then governor of the French colony, and one of the most picturesque figures in American history. A soldier of France; a polished courtier at the royal court; a hero on the battle-field, and a favorite in the ball-room; a man poor in pocket, but rich in influential connections, — Frontenac had come to the New World to seek that fortune and position which he had in vain sought in the Old. When the vague rumors of the hostile expedition of the Massachusetts colony reached his ears, Frontenac was far from Quebec, toiling in the western part of the colony. Wasting no time, he turned his steps toward the threatened city. His road lay through an almost trackless wilderness; his progress was impeded by the pelting rains of the autumnal storms. But through forest and through rain he rode fiercely; and at last as he burst from the forest, and saw towering before him the rocks of Cape Diamond, a cry of joy burst from his lips. On the broad, still bosom of the St. Lawrence Bay floated not a single hostile sail. The soldier had come in time.

With the governor in the city, all took courage, and the work of preparation for the coming struggle went forward with a rush. Far and wide throughout the parishes was spread the news of war, and daily volunteers came flocking in to the defence. The ramparts were strengthened, and cannon mounted. Volunteers and regulars drilled side by side, until the four thousand men in the city were converted into a well-disciplined body of troops. And all the time the sentinels on the Saut au Matelot were eagerly watching the river for the first sign of the English invaders.

It was before dawn, on the morning of Oct. 16, that the people of the little city, and the soldiery in the tents, were awakened by the alarm raised by the sentries. All rushed to the brink of the heights, and peered eagerly out into the darkness. Far down the river could be seen the twinkling lights of vessels. As the eager watchers strove to count them, other lights appeared upon the scene, moving to and fro, but with a steady advance upon Quebec. The gray dawn, breaking in the east, showed the advancing fleet. Frontenac and his lieutenants watched the ships of the enemy round the jutting headland of the Point of Orleans; and, by the time the sun had risen, thirty-four hostile craft were at anchor in the basin of Quebec.

The progress of the fleet up the river, from the point at which it had been so long delayed, had been slow, and greatly impeded by the determined hostility of the settlers along the banks. The sailors at their work were apt to be startled by the whiz of a bullet; and an inquiry as to the cause would have probably discovered some crouching sharp-shooter, his long rifle in his hand, hidden in a clump of bushes along the shore. Bands of armed men followed the fleet up the stream, keeping pace with the vessels, and occasionally affording gentle reminders of their presence in the shape of volleys of rifle-balls that sung through the crowded decks of the transports, and gave the sailor lads a hearty disgust for this river fighting. Phipps tried repeatedly to land shore parties to clear the banks of skirmishers, and to move on the city by land. As often, however, as he made the effort, his troops were beaten back by the ambushed sharp-shooters, and his boats returned to the ships, bringing several dead and wounded.

While the soldiery on the highlands of Quebec were eagerly examining the hostile fleet, the invaders were looking with wonder and admiration at the scene of surpassing beauty spread out before them. Parkman, the historian and lover of the annals of the French in America, thus describes it: —

"When, after his protracted voyage, Phipps sailed into the basin of Quebec, one of the grandest scenes on the western continent opened upon his sight. The wide expanse of waters, the lofty promontory beyond, and the opposing Heights of Levi, the cataract of Montmorenci, the distant range of the Laurentian Mountains, the warlike rock with its diadem of walls and towers, the roofs of the Lower Town clustering on the strand beneath, the Chateau St. Louis perched at the brink of the cliff, and over it the white banner, spangled with *fleurs de lis*, flaunting defiance in the clear autumnal air."

Little time was spent, however, in admiration of the scene. When the click of the last chain-cable had ceased, and, with their anchors reposing at the bottom of the stream, the ships swung around with their bows to the current, a boat put off from the flag-ship bearing an officer intrusted with a note from Phipps to the commandant of the fort. The reception of this officer was highly theatrical. Half way to the shore he was taken into a French canoe, blindfolded, and taken ashore. The populace crowded about him as he landed, hooting and jeering him as he was led through winding, narrow ways, up stairways, and over obstructions, until at last the bandage was torn from his eyes, and he found himself in the presence of Frontenac. The French commander was clad in a brilliant uniform, and surrounded by his staff, gay in warlike finery. With courtly courtesy he asked the envoy for his letter, which, proving to be a curt summons to surrender, he answered forthwith in a stinging speech. The envoy, abashed, asked for a written answer.

"No," thundered Frontenac, "I will answer your master only by the mouths of my cannon, that he may learn that a man like me is not to be summoned after this fashion. Let him do his best, and I will do mine."

The envoy returned to his craft, and made his report. The next day hostilities opened. Wheeling his ships into line before the fortifications, Phipps opened a heavy fire upon the city. From the frowning ramparts on the heights, Frontenac's cannon answered in kind. Fiercely the contest raged until nightfall, and vast was the consumption of gunpowder; but damage done on either side was but little. All night the belligerents rested on their arms; but, at daybreak, the roar of the cannonade recommenced.

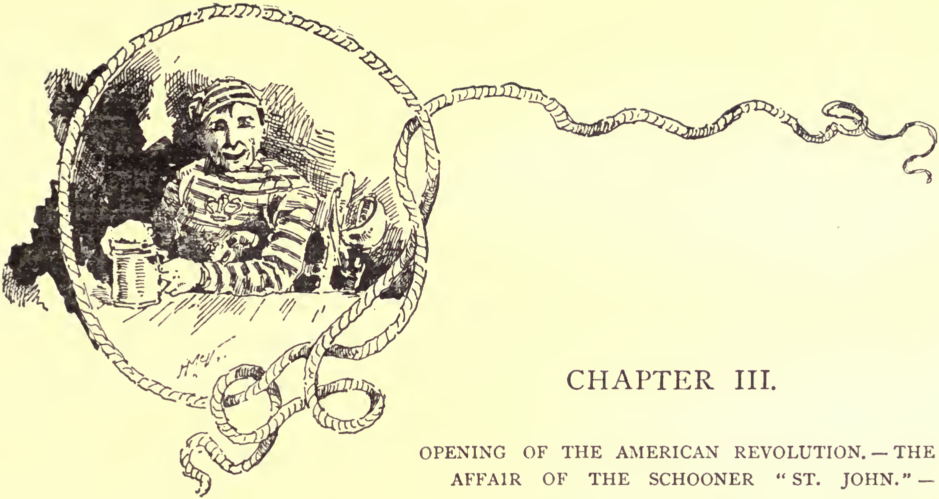
The gunners of the opposing forces were now upon their mettle, and the gunnery was much better than the day before. A shot from the shore cut the flag-staff of the admiral's ship, and the cross of St. George fell into the river. Straightway a canoe put out from the shore, and with swift, strong paddle-strokes was guided in chase of the floating trophy. The fire of the fleet was quickly concentrated upon the adventurous canoeists. Cannon-balls and rifle-bullets cut the water about them; but their frail craft survived the leaden tempest, and they captured the trophy, and bore it off in triumph.

Phipps felt that the incident was an unfavorable omen, and would discourage his men. He cast about in his mind for a means of retaliation. Far over the roofs of the city rose a tapering spire, that of the cathedral in the Upper Town. On this spire, the devout Catholics of the French city had hung a picture of the Holy Family as an invocation of Divine aid. Through his spy-glass, Phipps could see that some strange object hung from the steeple, and, suspecting its character, commanded the gunners to try to knock it down. For hours the Puritans wasted their ammunition in this vain target-practice, but to no avail. The picture still hung on high; and the devout Frenchmen ascribed its escape to a miracle, although its destruction would have been more miraculous still.

It did not take long to convince Phipps that in this contest his fleet was getting badly worsted, and he soon withdrew his vessels to a place of safety. The flag-ship had been fairly riddled with shot; and her rigging was so badly cut, that she could only get out of range of the enemy's guns by cutting her cables, and drifting away with the current. Her example was soon followed by the remaining vessels.

Sorely crestfallen, Phipps abandoned the fight, and prepared to return to Boston. His voyage thither was stormy; and three or four of his vessels never were heard of, having been dashed to pieces by the waves, or cast away upon the iron-bound coast of Nova Scotia or Maine. His expedition was the most costly in lives and in treasure ever undertaken by a single colony, and, despite its failure, forms the most notable incident in the naval annals of the colonies prior to the Revolution.

The French colonies continued to be a fruitful source of war and turmoil. Many were the joint military and naval expeditions fitted out against them by the British colonies. Quebec, Louisbourg, and Port Royal were all threatened; and the two latter were captured by colonial expeditions. From a naval point of view, these expeditions were but trifling. They are of some importance, however, in that they gave the colonists an opportunity to try their prowess on the ocean; and in this irregular service were bred some sailors who fought right valiantly for the rebellious colonies against the king, and others who did no less valiant service under the royal banner.



CHAPTER III.

OPENING OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION. — THE AFFAIR OF THE SCHOONER "ST. JOHN." — THE PRESS-GANG AND ITS WORK. — THE SLOOP "LIBERTY." — DESTRUCTION OF THE "GASPEE." — THE BOSTON TEA-PARTY.

IT is unnecessary to enter into an account of the causes that led up to the revolt of the American Colonies against the oppression of King George and his subservient Parliament. The story of the Stamp Act, the indignation of the Colonies, their futile attempts to convince Parliament of the injustice of the measure, the stern measures adopted by the British to put down the rising insubordination, the Boston Massacre, and the battles at Concord and Lexington are familiar to every American boy. But not every young American knows that almost the first act of open resistance to the authority of the king took place on the water, and was to some extent a naval action.

The revenue laws, enacted by the English Parliament as a means of extorting money from the Colonies, were very obnoxious to the people of America. Particularly did the colonists of Rhode Island protest against them, and seldom lost an opportunity to evade the payment of the taxes.

Between Providence and Newport, illicit trade flourished; and the waters of Narragansett Bay were dotted with the sail of small craft carrying cargoes on which no duties had ever been paid. In order to stop this nefarious traffic, armed vessels were stationed in the Bay, with orders to chase and search all craft suspected of smuggling. The presence of these vessels gave great offence to the colonists, and the inflexible manner in which the naval officers discharged their duty caused more than one open defiance of the authority of King George.

The first serious trouble to grow out of the presence of the British cruisers in the bay was the affair of the schooner "St. John." This vessel was engaged in patrolling the waters of the bay in search of smugglers. While so engaged, her commander, Lieut. Hill, learned that a brig had discharged a suspicious cargo at night near Howland's Ferry. Running down to that point to investigate, the king's officers found the cargo to consist of smuggled goods; and, leaving a few men in charge, the cruiser hastily put out to sea in pursuit of the smuggler. The swift sailing schooner soon overtook the brig, and the latter was taken in to Newport as a prize. Although this affair occurred early in 1764, the sturdy colonists even then had little liking for the officers of the king. The sailors of the "St. John," careless of the evident dislike of the citizens of the town, swaggered about the streets, boasting of their capture, and making merry at the expense of the Yankees. Two or three fights between sailors and townspeople so stirred up the landsmen, that they determined to destroy the "St. John," and had actually fitted up an armed sloop for that purpose, when a second man-of-war appeared in the harbor and put a final stopper to the project. Though thus balked of their revenge, the townspeople showed their hatred for the king's navy by seizing a battery, and firing several shots at the two armed vessels, but without effect.

During the same year, the little town of Newport again gave evidence of the growth of the revolutionary spirit. This time the good old British custom of procuring sailors for the king's ships by a system of kidnapping, commonly known as impressment, was the cause of the outbreak. For some months the British man-of-war "Maidstone" lay in the harbor of Newport, idly tugging at her anchors. It was a period of peace, and her officers had nothing to occupy their attention. Therefore they devoted themselves to increasing the crew of the vessel by means of raids upon the taverns along the water-front of the city.

The seafaring men of Newport knew little peace while the "Maidstone" was in port. The king's service was the dread of every sailor; and, with the press-gang nightly walking the streets, no sailor could feel secure. All knew the life led by the sailors on the king's ships. Those were the days when the cat-o'-nine-tails flourished, and the command of a beardless bit of a midshipmen was enough to send a poor fellow to the gratings, to have his back cut to pieces by the merciless lash. The Yankee sailors had little liking for this phase of sea-life, and they gave the men-of-war a wide berth.

Often it happened, however, that a party of jolly mariners sitting over their pipes and grog in the snug parlor of some sea-shore tavern, spinning yarns of the service they had seen on the gun-decks of his Majesty's ships, or of shipwreck and adventure in the merchant service, would start up and listen in affright, as the measured tramp of a body of men came up the street. Then came the heavy blow on the door.

"Open in the king's name," shouts a gruff voice outside; and the entrapped sailors, overturning the lights, spring for doors and windows, in vain attempts to escape the fate in store for them. The press-gang seldom returned to the ship empty handed, and the luckless tar who once fell into their clutches was wise to accept his capture good naturedly; for the bos'n's cat was the remedy commonly prescribed for sulkiness.

As long as the "Maidstone" lay in the harbor of Newport, raids such as this were of common occurrence. The people of the city grumbled a little; but it was the king's will, and none dared oppose it. The wives and sweethearts of the kidnapped sailors shed many a bitter tear over the disappearance of their husbands and lovers; but what were the tears of women to King George? And so the press-gang of the "Maidstone" might have continued to enjoy unopposed the stirring sport of hunting men like beasts, had the leaders not committed one atrocious act of inhumanity that roused the long-suffering people to resistance.

One breezy afternoon, a stanch brig, under full sail, came up the bay, and entered the harbor of Newport. Her sides were weather-beaten, and her dingy sails and patched cordage showed that she had just completed her long voyage. Her crew, a fine set of bronzed and hardy sailors, were gathered on her forecastle, eagerly regarding the cluster of cottages that made up the little town of Newport. In those cottages were many loved ones, wives, mothers, and sweethearts, whom the brave fellows had not seen for long and weary months; for the brig was just returning from a voyage to the western coast of Africa.

It is hard to describe the feelings aroused by the arrival of a ship in port after a long voyage. From the outmost end of the longest wharf the relatives and friends of the sailors eagerly watch the approaching vessel, striving to find in her appearance some token of the safety of the loved ones on board. If a flag hangs at half-mast in the rigging, bitter is the suspense, and fearful the dread, of each anxious waiter, lest her husband or lover or son be the unfortunate one whose death is mourned. And on the deck of the ship the excitement is no less great. Even the hardened breast of the sailor swells with emotion when he first catches sight of his native town, after long months of absence. With eyes sharpened by constant searching for objects upon the broad bosom of the ocean, he scans the waiting crowd, striving to distinguish in the distance some well-beloved face. His spirits are light with the happy anticipation of a season in port with his loved ones, and he discharges his last duties before leaving the ship with a blithe heart.

So it was with the crew of the home-coming brig. Right merrily they sung out their choruses as they pulled at the ropes, and brought the vessel to anchor. The rumble of the hawser through the hawse-holes was sweet music to their ears; and so intent were they upon the crowd on the dock, that they did not notice two long-boats which had put off from the man-of-war, and were pulling for the brig. The captain of the merchantman, however, noticed the approach of the boats, and wondered what it meant. "Those fellows think I've smuggled goods aboard," said he. "However, they can spend their time searching if they want. I've nothing in the hold I'm afraid to have seen."

The boats were soon alongside; and two or three officers, with a handful of jackies, clambered aboard the brig.

"Muster your men aft, captain," said the leader, scorning any response to the captain's salutation. "The king has need of a few fine fellows for his service."

"Surely, sir, you are not about to press any of these men," protested the captain. "They are just returning after a long voyage, and have not yet seen their families."

"What's that to me, sir?" was the response. "Muster your crew without more words."

Sullenly the men came aft, and ranged themselves in line before the boarding-officers. Each feared lest he might be one of those chosen to fill the ship's roll of the "Maidstone;" yet each cherished the hope that he might be spared to go ashore, and see the loved ones whose greeting he had so fondly anticipated.

The boarding-officers looked the crew over, and, after consulting together, gruffly ordered the men to go below, and pack up their traps.

"Surely you don't propose to take my entire crew?" said the captain of the brig in wondering indignation.

"I know my business, sir," was the gruff reply, "and I do not propose to suffer any more interference."

The crew of the brig soon came on deck, carrying their bags of clothes, and were ordered into the man-o'-war's boats, which speedily conveyed them to their floating prison. Their fond visions of home had been rudely dispelled. They were now enrolled in his Majesty's service, and subject to the will of a blue-coated tyrant. This was all their welcome home.

When the news of this cruel outrage reached the shore, the indignation of the people knew no bounds. The thought of their fellow-townsmen thus cruelly deprived of their liberty, at the conclusion of a long and perilous voyage, set the whole village in a turmoil. Wild plots were concocted for the destruction of the man-of-war, that, sullen and unyielding, lay at her anchorage in the harbor. But the wrong done was beyond redress. The captured men were not to be liberated. There was no ordnance in the little town to compete with the guns of the "Maidstone," and the enraged citizens could only vent their anger by impotent threats and curses. Bands of angry men and boys paraded the streets, crying, ' Down with the press-gang," and invoking the vengeance of Heaven upon the officers of the man-of-war. Finally, they found a boat belonging to the "Maidstone" lying at a wharf. Dragging this ashore, the crowd procured ropes, and, after pulling the captured trophy up and down the streets, took it to the common in front of the Court-House, where it was burned in the presence of a great crowd, which heaped execrations upon the heads of the officers of the "Maidstone," and King George's press-gang.

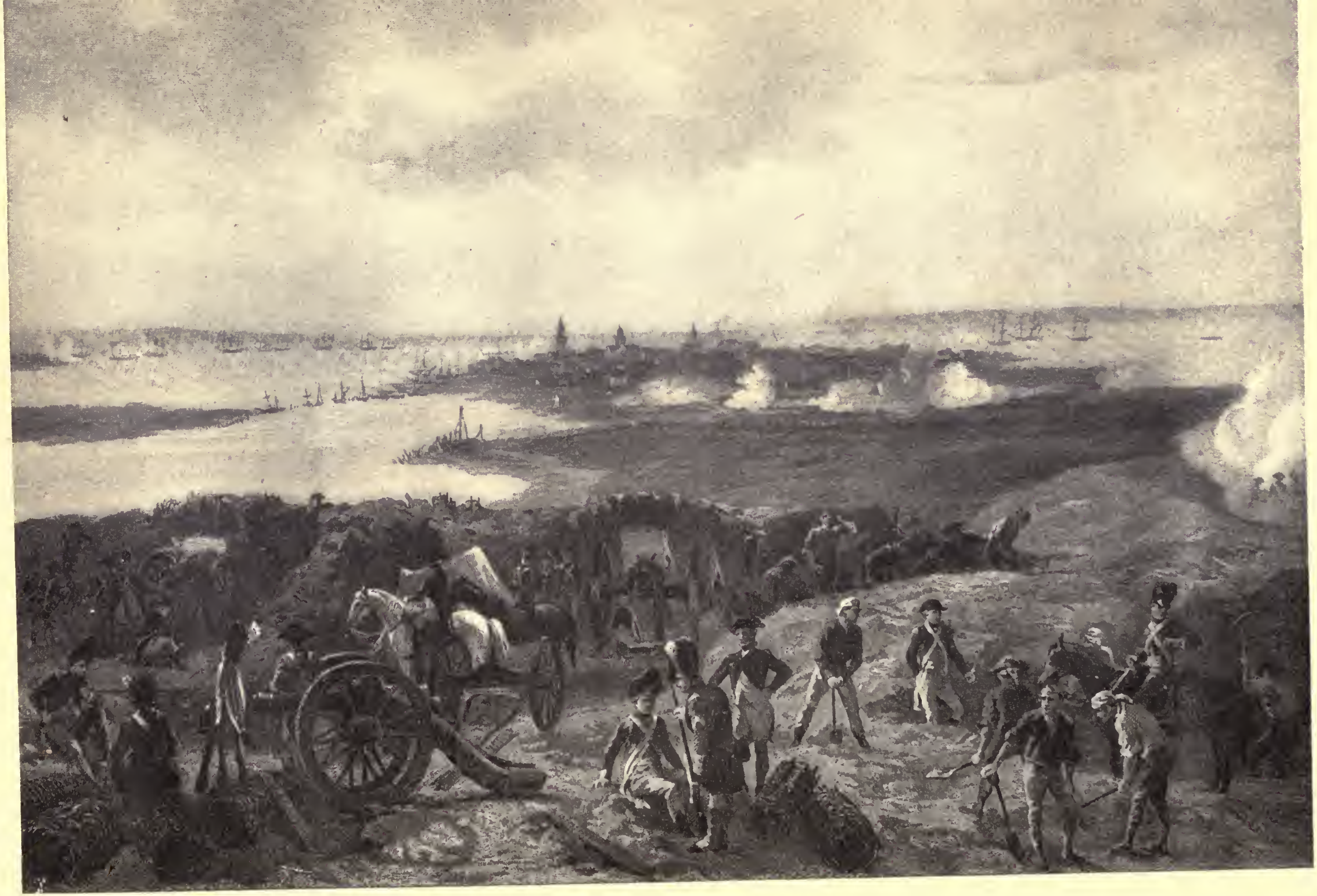
After this occurrence, there was a long truce between the people of Newport and the officers of the British navy. But the little town was intolerant of oppression, and the revolutionary spirit broke out again in 1769. Historians have eulogized Boston as the cradle of liberty, and by the British pamphleteers of that era the Massachusetts city was often called a hot-bed of rebellion. It would appear, however, that, while the people of Boston were resting contentedly under the king's rule, the citizens of Newport were chafing under the yoke, and were quick to resist any attempts at tyranny.

It is noticeable, that, in each outbreak of the people of Newport against the authority of the king's vessels, the vigor of the resistance increased, and their acts of retaliation became bolder. Thus in the affair of the "St. John" the king's vessel was fired on, while in the affair of the "Maidstone" the royal property was actually destroyed. In the later affairs with the sloop "Liberty" and the schooner "Gaspee," the revolt of the colonists was still more open, and the consequences more serious.

In 1769 the armed sloop "Liberty," Capt. Reid, was stationed in Narragansett Bay for the purpose of enforcing the revenue laws. Her errand made her obnoxious to the people on the coast, and the extraordinary zeal of her captain in discharging his duty made her doubly detested by seafaring people afloat or shore.

On the 17th of July the "Liberty," while cruising near the mouth of the bay, sighted a sloop and a brig under full sail, bound out. Promptly giving chase, the armed vessel soon overtook the merchantmen sufficiently to send a shot skipping along the crests of the waves, as a polite invitation to stop. The two vessels hove to, and a boat was sent from the man-of-war to examine their papers, and see if all was right. Though no flaw was found in the papers of either vessel, Capt. Reid determined to take them back to Newport, which was done. In the harbor the two vessels were brought to anchor under the guns of the armed sloop, and without any reason or explanation were kept there several days. After submitting to this wanton detention for two days, Capt. Packwood of the brig went on board the "Liberty" to make a protest to Capt. Reid, and at the same time to get some wearing apparel taken from his cabin at the time his vessel had been captured. On reaching the deck of the armed vessel, he found Capt. Reid absent, and his request for his property was received with ridicule. Hot words soon led to violence; and as Capt. Packwood stepped in to his boat to return to his ship, he was fired at several times, none of the shots taking effect.

The news of this assault spread like wildfire in the little town. The



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SIEGE OF CHARLESTON, S. C., MAY, 1780

people congregated on the streets, demanding reparation. The authorities sent a message to Capt. Reid, demanding that the man who fired the shots be given up. Soon a boat came from the "Liberty," bringing a man who was handed over to the authorities as the culprit. A brief examination into the case showed that the man was not the guilty party, and that his surrender was a mere subterfuge. The people then determined to be trifled with no longer, and made preparations to take vengeance upon the insolent oppressors.

The work of preparation went on quietly; and by nightfall a large number of men had agreed to assemble at a given signal, and march upon the enemy. Neither the authorities of the town nor the officers on the threatened vessel were given any intimation of the impending outbreak. Yet the knots of men who stood talking earnestly on the street corners, or looked significantly at the trim navy vessel lying in the harbor, might have well given cause for suspicion.

That night, just as the dusk was deepening into dark, a crowd of men marched down the street to a spot where a number of boats lay hidden in the shadow of a wharf. Embarking in these silently, they bent to the oars at the whispered word of command; and the boats were soon gliding swiftly over the smooth, dark surface of the harbor, toward the sloop-of-war. As they drew near, the cry of the lookout rang out, —

"Boat ahoy!"

No answer. The boats, crowded with armed men, still advanced.

"Boat ahoy! Answer, or I'll fire."

And, receiving no response, the lookout gave the alarm, and the watch came tumbling up, just in time to be driven below or disarmed by the crowd of armed men that swarmed over the gunwale of the vessel. There was no bloodshed. The crew of the "Liberty" was fairly surprised, and made no resistance. The victorious citizens cut the sloop's cables, and allowed her to float on shore near Long Wharf. Then, feeling sure that their prey could not escape them, they cut away her masts, liberated their captives, and taking the sloop's boats, dragged them through the streets to the common, where they were burned on a triumphal bonfire, amid the cheers of the populace.

But the exploit was not to end here. With the high tide the next day, the hulk of the sloop floated away, and drifted ashore again on

Goat Island. When night fell, some adventurous spirits stealthily went over, and, applying the torch to the stranded ship, burned it to the water's edge. Thus did the people of Newport resist tyranny.

It may well be imagined that so bold a defiance of the royal authority caused a great sensation. Prolonged and vigorous were the attempts of the servants of the king to find out the rebellious parties who had thus destroyed his Majesty's property. But their efforts were in vain. The identity of the captors of the "Liberty" was carefully concealed, and even to this day none of their names has become known. But, before the people of Newport had done talking about this affair, another outbreak occurred, which cast the capture and destruction of the "Liberty" into the shade.

This was the affair of the "Gaspee," — considered by many historians the virtual opening of the revolutionary struggle of the Colonies against Great Britain. The "Gaspee," like the "St. John" and the "Liberty," was an armed vessel stationed in Narragansett Bay to enforce the revenue. She was commanded by Lieut. Dudingston of the British navy, and carried eight guns. By pursuing the usual tactics of the British officers stationed on the American coast, Duddingston had made himself hated; and his vessel was marked for destruction. Not a boat could pass between Providence and Newport without being subjected to search by the crew of the "Gaspee;" and the Yankee sailors swore darkly, that, when the time was ripe, they would put an end to the Britisher's officious meddling.

The propitious time arrived one bright June morning in the year 1772, when the "Gaspee" gave chase to a Newport packet which was scudding for Providence, under the command of Capt. Thomas Lindsey. The armed vessel was a clean-cut little craft, and, carrying no heavier load than a few light guns of the calibre then in vogue, could overhaul with ease almost any merchantman on the coast. So on this eventful day she was rapidly overhauling the chase, when, by a blunder of the pilot, she was run hard and fast upon a spit of sand running out from Namquit Point, and thus saw her projected prize sail away in triumph.

But the escape of her prize was not the greatest disaster that was to befall the "Gaspee" that day. Lindsey, finding himself safe from the clutches of the enemy, continued his course to Providence, and on arriving at that city reported the condition of the "Gaspee" to a prominent citizen, who straightway determined to organize an expedition for the destruction of the pest of marine traffic. He therefore gave orders to a trusty ship-master to collect eight of the largest long-boats in the harbor, and, having muffled their oars and rowlocks, place them at Fenner's Wharf, near a noted tavern.

That night, soon after sunset, as the tradesmen were shutting up their shops, and the laboring men were standing on the streets talking after their day's work, a man passed down the middle of each street, beating a drum, and crying aloud, —

"The schooner 'Gaspee' is ashore on Namquit Point. Who will help destroy her?"

All who expressed a desire to join in the enterprise were directed to repair to the Sabin House; and thither, later in the evening, flocked many of the townspeople, carrying guns, powder-flasks, and bullet-pouches. Within the house all was life and bustle. The great hall was crowded with determined men, discussing the plan of attack. Guns stood in every corner, while down in the kitchen a half a dozen men stood about a glowing fire busily casting bullets. At last, all being prepared, the party crossed the street to the dock, and embarked,—a veteran sea-captain taking the tiller of each boat.

On the way down the harbor the boats stopped, and took aboard a number of paving-stones and stout clubs, as weapons for those who had no muskets. After this stoppage the boats continued on their way, until, when within sixty yards of the "Gaspee," the long-drawn hail, "Who comes there?" rang out over the water. No answer was made, and the lookout quickly repeated his hail. Capt. Whipple, one of the leaders of the attack, then responded,—

"I want to come on board."

Dudingston, who was below at the time, rushed on deck, exclaiming, "Stand off. You can't come aboard."

As Dudingston stood at the side of the "Gaspee" warning off the assailants, he presented a good mark; and Joseph Bucklin, who pulled an oar in the leading boat, turned to a comrade and said, "Ephe, lend me your gun, and I can kill that fellow." The gun was accordingly handed him, and he fired. Dudingston fell to the deck. Just as the shot was fired, the leader of the assailants cried out,—

"I am sheriff of the county of Kent. I am come for the commander of this vessel; and have him I will, dead or alive. Men, spring to your oars."

In an instant the boats were under the lee of the schooner, and the attacking party was clambering over the side. The first man to attempt to board seized a rope, and was clambering up, when one of the British cut the rope, and let him fall into the water. He quickly recovered himself, and was soon on deck, where he found his comrades driving the crew of the "Gaspee" below, and meeting with but little resistance.

A surgeon who was with the party of Americans led the boarders below, and began the task of tying the hands of the captured crew with strong tarred cord. While thus engaged, he was called on deck.

"What is wanted, Mr. Brown?" asked he, calling the name of the person inquiring for him.

"Don't call names, but go immediately into the cabin," was the response. "There is one wounded, and will bleed to death."

The surgeon went into the captain's cabin, and there found Dudingston, severely wounded, and bleeding freely. Seeing no cloth suitable for bandages, the surgeon opened his vest, and began to tear his own shirt into strips to bind up the wound. With the tenderest care the hurt of the injured officer was attended to; and he was gently lowered into a boat, and rowed up the river to Providence.

The Americans remained in possession of the captured schooner, and quickly began the work of demolition. In the captain's cabin were a number of bottles of liquor, and for these the men made a rush; but the American surgeon dashed the bottles to pieces with the heels of his heavy boots, so that no scenes of drunkenness were enacted. After breaking up the furniture and trappings of the craft, her people were bundled over the side into the boats of their captors, and the torch was set to the schooner. The boats lay off a little distance until the roaring flames satisfied them that the "Gaspee" would never again annoy American merchantmen. As the schooner's shotted guns went off one after the other, the Americans turned their boats' prows homeward, and soon dispersed quietly to their homes.

It is almost incredible that the identity of the parties to this expedition was kept a secret until long after the Revolution. Although the British authorities made the most strenuous efforts, and offered huge rewards for the detection of the culprits, not one was discovered until after the Colonies had thrown off the royal yoke, when they came boldly forward, and boasted of their exploit.

After the destruction of the "Gaspee," the colonists in no way openly opposed the authority of the king, until the time of those stirring events immediately preceding the American Revolution. Little was done on the water to betoken the hatred of the colonists for King George. The turbulent little towns of Providence and Newport subsided, and the scene of revolt was transferred to Massachusetts, and particularly to Boston. In the streets of Boston occurred the famous massacre, and at the wharves of Boston lay the three ships whose cargo aroused the ire of the famous Boston tea-party.

To almost every young American the story of the Boston tea-party is as familiar as his own name, — how the British Parliament levied a tax upon tea, how the Colonies refused to pay it, and determined to use none of the article; how British merchants strove to force the tea upon the unwilling colonists, and how the latter refused to permit the vessels to unload, and in some cases drove them back to England. At Philadelphia, Annapolis, Charleston, Newport, and Providence, disturbances took place over the arrival of the tea-ships; but at Boston the turbulence was the greatest.

The story of that dramatic scene in the great drama of American revolution has been told too often to bear repetition. The arrival of three ships laden with tea aroused instant indignation in the New England city. Mass meetings were held, the captains of the vessels warned not to attempt to unload their cargoes, and the consignees were terrified into refusing to have any thing to do with the tea.

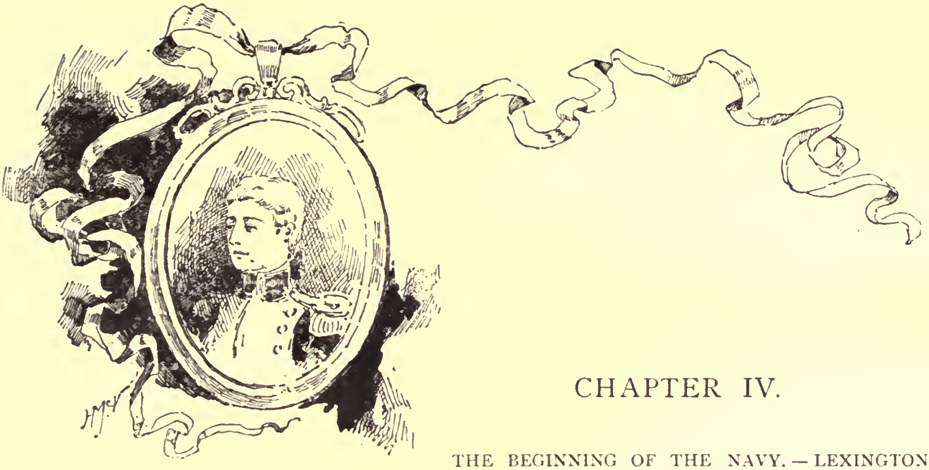
In the midst of an indignation meeting held at the Old South Church, a shrill war-whoop resounded from one of the galleries. The startled audience, looking in that direction, saw a person disguised as a Mohawk Indian, who wildly waved his arms and shouted, —

"Boston Harbor a tea-pot to-night! Hurrah for Griffin's Wharf."

In wild excitement the meeting adjourned, and the people crowded out into the streets. Other Indians were seen running down the streets in the direction of Griffin's Wharf, where the tea-ships were moored, and thither the people turned their steps.

On reaching the wharf, a scene of wild confusion was witnessed. The three tea-ships lay side by side at the wharf. Their decks were crowded with men, many of them wearing the Indian disguise. The hatches were off the hatchways; and the chests of tea were being rapidly passed up, broken open, and thrown overboard. There was little noise, as the workers seemed to be well disciplined, and went about their work in the bright moonlight with systematic activity. In about three hours the work was done. Three hundred and forty-two chests of tea had been thrown overboard, and the rioters dispersed quietly to their homes.

The incident of the destruction of the tea in Boston Harbor was the last of the petty incidents that led up to the American Revolution. Following quick upon it came Lexington, Concord, and Bunker Hill, — then the great conflict was fairly under way, and the Colonies were fighting for liberty. What part the sailors of the colonies took in that struggle, it is the purpose of this book to recount.



CHAPTER IV.

THE BEGINNING OF THE NAVY. — LEXINGTON AND CONCORD. — A BLOW STRUCK IN MAINE. — CAPTURE OF THE "MARGARETTA." — GEN. WASHINGTON AND THE NAVY. — WORK OF CAPT. MANLY.

IN TREATING of the history of the navy during the war of the Revolution, we must always bear in mind the fact, that, during the greater part of that war, there was no navy. Indeed, the subject presents much the same aspect as the celebrated chapter on snakes in Ireland, which consisted of exactly six words, "There are no snakes in Ireland." So many of the episodes and incidents of the Revolutionary war that we chronicle as part of the naval history of that struggle are naval only in that they took place on the water. The participants in them were often longshoremen, fishermen, or privateersmen, and but seldom sailors enrolled in the regular navy of the united colonies. Nevertheless, these irregular forces accomplished some results that would be creditable to a navy in the highest state of efficiency and discipline.

The expense of building vessels-of-war, and the difficulty, amounting even to impossibility, of procuring cannon for their armament, deterred the Colonies from equipping a naval force. All the energies of the revolutionists were directed towards organizing and equipping the army. The cause of independence upon the ocean was left to shift for itself. But, as the war spread, the depredations of British vessels along the coast became so intolerable that some colonies fitted out armed vessels for self-protection. Private enterprise sent out many privateers to prey upon British commerce, so that the opening months of the year 1776 saw many vessels on the ocean to support the cause of the Colonies. To man these vessels, there were plenty of sailors; for even at that early day New England had begun to develop that race of hardy seamen for which she is still noted in this day of decadence in the American marine. There was, however, a sad lack of trained officers to command the vessels of the infant navy. Many Americans were enrolled on the lists of the ships flying the royal banner of England, but most of these remained in the British service. The men, therefore, who were to command the ships of the colonies, were trained in the rough school of the merchant service, and had smelt gunpowder only when resisting piratical attacks, or in serving themselves as privateers.

For these reasons the encounters and exploits that we shall consider as being part of the naval operations of the Revolutionary war were of a kind that would to-day be regarded as insignificant skirmishes; and the naval officer of to-day would look with supreme contempt upon most of his brethren of '76, as so many untrained sea-guerillas. Nevertheless, the achievements of some of the seamen of the Revolution are not insignificant, even when compared with exploits of the era of Farragut; and it must be remembered that the efforts of the devoted men were directed against a nation that had in commission at the opening of the war three hundred and fifty-three vessels, and even then bore proudly the title conferred upon her by the consent of all nations, — "The Mistress of the Seas."

It was on the 19th of April, 1775, that the redoubtable Major Pitcairn and his corps of scarlet-coated British regulars shot down the colonists on the green at Lexington, and then fled back to Boston followed by the enraged minute-men, who harassed the retreating red-coats with a constant fire of musketry. The news of the battle spread far and wide; and wherever the story was told, the colonists began arming themselves, and preparing for resistance to the continually increasing despotism of the British authorities.

On the 9th of May, a coasting schooner from Boston put into the little seaport of Machias on the coast of Maine. The people of the little town gathered at the wharf, and from the sailors first heard the story of Lexington and Concord. The yoke of the British Government had rested lightly on the shoulders of the people of Machias. Far from the chief cities of the New World, they had heard little of the continued dissensions between the Colonies and the home Government, and they heard the story of the rebellion with amazement. But however unprepared they might have been for the news of the outbreak, their sympathies went warmly out to their struggling brethren, and they determined to place themselves shoulder to shoulder with the Massachusetts colonists in the fight against the oppression of the British. Their opportunity for action came that very night.

As the sturdy young colonists stood on the deck listening to the stories of the newly arrived sailors, they could see floating lightly at anchor near the wharf a trimly rigged schooner flying the ensign of the British navy. This craft was the "Margaretta," an armed schooner acting as convoy to two sloops that were then loading with ship-timber to be used in the service of the king.

The Boston sailors had not yet finished their narrative of the two battles, when the thought occurred to some of the adventurous listeners that they might strike a retaliatory blow by capturing the "Margaretta." Therefore, bidding the sailors to say nothing to the British of Lexington and Concord, they left the wharf and dispersed through the town, seeking for recruits. That same evening, sixty stalwart men assembled in a secluded farm-house, and laid their plans for the destruction of the schooner. It was then Saturday night, and the conspirators determined to attack the vessel the next morning while the officers were at church. All were to proceed by twos and threes to the wharf, in order that no suspicion might be aroused. Once at the water-side, they would rush to their boats, and carry the schooner by boarding.

Sunday morning dawned clear, and all seemed propitious for the conspirators. The "Margaretta" had then been in port for more than a week, and her officers had no reason to doubt the loyalty and friendship of the inhabitants: no whisper of the occurrences in Massachusetts, nor any hint of the purposes of the people of Machias, had reached their ears. Therefore, on this peaceful May morning, Capt. Moore donned his full-dress uniform, and with his brother officers proceeded to the little church in the village.

Every thing then seemed favorable to the success of the adventure.

The "Margaretta," manned by a sleepy crew, and deserted by her officers, lay within easy distance of the shore. It seemed as though the conspirators had only to divide into two parties; and while the one surrounded the church, and captured the worshipping officers, the others might descend upon the schooner, and easily make themselves masters of all.

But the plot failed. History fails to record just how or why the suspicions of Capt. Moore were aroused. Whether it was that the wary captain noticed the absence of most of the young men of the congregation, or whether he saw the conspirators assembling on the dock, is not known. But certain it is that the good dominie in the pulpit, and the pious people in the pews, were mightily startled by the sudden uprisal of Capt. Moore, who sprang from his seat, and, calling upon his officers to follow him, leaped through the great window of the church, and ran like mad for the shore, followed by the rest of the naval party.

There was no more church for the good people of Machias that morning. Even the preacher came down from his pulpit to stare through his horn-rimmed glasses at the retreating forms of his whilom listeners. And, as he stood in blank amazement at the church door, he saw a large party of the missing young men of his congregation come dashing down the street in hot pursuit of the retreating mariners. In their hands, the pursuers carried sabres, cutlasses, old flint-lock muskets, cumbrous horse-pistols, scythes, and reaping-hooks. The pursued wore no arms; and, as no boat awaited them at the shore, their case looked hopeless indeed. But the old salt left in charge of the schooner was equal to the occasion. The unsabbath-like tumult on the shore quickly attracted his attention, and with unfeigned astonishment he had observed his commander's unseemly egress from the church. But, when the armed band of colonists appeared upon the scene, he ceased to rub his eyes in wonder, and quickly loaded up a swivel gun, with which he let fly, over the heads of his officers, and in dangerous proximity to the advancing colonists. This fire checked the advance of the conspirators; and, while they wavered and hung back, a boat put off from the schooner, and soon took the officers aboard. Then, after firing a few solid shot over the town, merely as an admonition of what might be expected if the hot-headed young men persisted in their violent outbreaks, the "Margaretta" dropped down the bay to a more secluded anchorage.

The defeated conspirators were vastly chagrined at the miscarriage of their plot; but, nothing daunted, they resolved to attempt to carry the schooner by assault, since strategy had failed. Therefore, early the next morning, four young men seized upon a sloop, and, bringing her up to the wharf, cheered lustily. A crowd soon gathered, and the project was explained, and volunteers called for. Thirty-five hardy sailors and woodmen hastily armed themselves with muskets, pitchforks, and axes; and, after taking aboard a small supply of provisions, the sloop dropped down the harbor toward the "Margaretta." The captain of the threatened schooner had observed through his spy-glass the proceedings at the wharf, and suspected his danger. He was utterly ignorant of the reason for this sudden hostility on the part of the people of Machias. He knew nothing of the quarrel that had thus provoked the rebellion of the colonies. Therefore, he sought to avoid a conflict; and, upon the approach of the sloop, he hoisted his anchor, and fled down the bay.

The sloop followed in hot haste. The Yankees crowded forward, and shouted taunts and jeers at their more powerful enemy who thus strove to avoid the conflict. Both vessels were under full sail; and the size of the schooner was beginning to tell, when, in jibing, she carried away her main boom. Nevertheless, she was so far ahead of the sloop that she was able to put into Holmes Bay, and take a spar out of a vessel lying there, before the sloop overtook her. But the delay incident upon changing the spars brought the sloop within range; and Capt. Moore, still anxious to avoid an encounter, cut away his boats, and stood out to sea. With plenty of sea room, and with a spanking breeze on the quarter, the sloop proved to be the better sailer. Moore then prepared for battle, and, as the sloop overhauled him, let fly one of his swivels, following it immediately with his whole broadside, killing one man. The sloop returned the fire with her one piece of ordnance, which was so well aimed as to kill the man at the helm of the "Margaretta," and clear her quarter-deck. The two vessels then closed, and a hand-to-hand battle began, in which muskets, hand-grenades, pikes, pitchforks, and cutlasses were used with deadly effect. The colonists strove to board their enemy, but were repeatedly beaten back. If any had thought that Capt. Moore's continued efforts to avoid a conflict were signs of cowardice, they were quickly undeceived; for that officer fought like a tiger, standing on the quarter-deck rail, cheering on his men, and hurling hand-grenades down upon his assailants, until a shot brought him down. The fall of their captain disheartened the British; and the Americans quickly swarmed over the sides of the "Margaretta," and drove her crew below.

This victory was no mean achievement for the colonists. The "Margaretta" was vastly the superior, both in metal and in the strength of her crew. She was ably officered by trained and courageous seamen; while the Yankees had no leaders save one Jeremiah O'Brien, whom they had elected, by acclamation, captain. That the Americans had so quickly brought their more powerful foe to terms, spoke volumes for their pluck and determination. Nor were they content to rest with the capture of the schooner. Transferring her armament to the sloop, O'Brien set out in search of prizes, and soon fell in with, and captured, two small British cruisers. These he took to Watertown, where the Massachusetts Legislature was then in session. The news of his victory was received with vast enthusiasm; and the Legislature conferred upon him the rank of captain, and ordered him to set out on another cruise, and particularly watch out for British vessels bringing over provisions or munitions of war to the king's troops in America.

But by this time Great Britain was aroused. The king saw all America up in arms against his authority, and he determined to punish the rebellious colonists. A naval expedition was therefore sent against Falmouth, and that unfortunate town was given to the flames. The Legislature of Massachusetts then passed a law granting commissions to privateers, and directing the seizure of British ships. Thereafter the hostilities on the ocean, which had been previously unauthorized and somewhat piratical, had the stamp of legislative authority.

Petty hostilities along the coast were very active during the first few months of the war. The exploits of Capt. O'Brien stirred up seamen from Maine to the Carolinas, and luckless indeed was the British vessel that fell into their clutches. At Providence two armed American vessels re-took a Yankee brig and sloop that had been captured by the British. At Dartmouth a party of soldiers captured a British armed brig. In addition to these exploits, the success of the American privateers, which had got to sea in great numbers, added greatly to the credit of the American cause.

The first order looking toward the establishment of a national navy was given by Gen. Washington in the latter part of 1775. The sagacious general, knowing that the British forces in Boston were supplied with provisions and munitions of war by sea, conceived the idea of fitting out some swift-sailing cruisers to intercept the enemy's cruisers, and cut off their supplies. Accordingly, on his own authority, he sent out Capt. Broughton with two armed schooners belonging to the colony of Massachusetts. Broughton was ordered to intercept two brigs bound for Quebec with military stores. This he failed to do, but brought in ten other vessels. Congress, however, directed the release of the captured ships, as it was then intended only to take such vessels as were actually employed in the king's service.

By this time Congress had become convinced that some naval force was absolutely essential to the success of the American cause. In October, 1775, it therefore fitted out, and ordered to sea, a number of small vessels. Of these the first to sail was the "Lee," under command of Capt. John Manly, whose honorable name, won in the opening years of the Revolution, fairly entitles him to the station of the father of the American navy.

With his swift cruiser, Manly patrolled the New England coast, and was marvellously successful in capturing British store-ships. Washington wrote to Congress, "I am in very great want of powder, lead, mortars, and, indeed, most sorts of military stores." Hardly had the letter been forwarded, when Manly appeared in port with a prize heavy laden with just the goods for which the commander-in-chief had applied. A queer coincidence is on record regarding these captured stores. Samuel Tucker, an able Yankee seaman, later an officer in the American navy, was on the docks at Liverpool as a transport was loading for America. As he saw the great cases of guns and barrels of powder marked "Boston" being lowered into the hold of the vessel, he said to a friend who stood with him, "I would walk barefoot one hundred miles, if by that means these arms could only take the direction of Cambridge." Three months later Tucker was in Washington's camp at Cambridge, and there saw the very arms he had so coveted on the Liverpool docks. They had been captured by Capt. Manly.

Manly's activity proved very harassing to the British, and the sloop-of-war "Falcon" was sent out to capture the Yankee. She fell in with the "Lee" near Gloucester, just as the latter was making for that port with a merchant schooner in convoy. Manly, seeing that the Englishman was too heavy for him, deserted his convoy and ran into the port, where he anchored, out of reach of the sloop's guns. Capt. Lindzee of the "Falcon" stopped to capture the abandoned schooner, and then taking his vessel to the mouth of the port, anchored her in such a way as to prevent any escape for the "Lee." He then prepared to capture the Yankee by boarding. The "Falcon" drew too much water to run alongside the "Lee" at the anchorage Manly had chosen; and the Englishman therefore put his men in large barges, and with a force of about forty men set out to capture the schooner. Manly saw the force that was to be brought against him, and sent his men to quarters, preparing for a desperate resistance. The schooner was lying near the shore; and the townspeople and militia gathered by the water-side, with guns in their hands, prepared to lend their aid to the brave defenders of the "Lee." As the three barges drew near the schooner, Manly mounted the rail, and hailed them, warning them to keep off lest he fire upon them.

"Fire, and be hanged to you," was the response of the lieutenant in command of the assailants. "We have no fear of traitors."

So saying, the British pressed on through a fierce storm of musketry from the deck of the schooner and from the shore. They showed no lack of courage. The lieutenant himself brought his boat under the cabin windows, and was in the act of boarding, when a shot from the shore struck him in the thigh, and he was carried back to the man-of-war. Capt. Lindzee, who had watched the progress of the fight from the deck of the "Falcon," was greatly enraged when his lieutenant was thus disabled; and he hastily despatched re-enforcements to the scene of action, and directed the gunners on the "Falcon" to commence a cannonade of the town.

"Now," said he with an oath, "my boys, we will aim at the Presbyterian church. Well, my brave fellows, one shot more, and the house of God will fall before you."

But the British were fairly outfought, and the outcome of the battle was disastrous to them. A newspaper of the period, speaking of the fight says, "Under God, our little party at the waterside performed wonders; for they soon made themselves masters of both the schooners, the cutter, the two barges, the boat, and every man in them, and all that pertained to them. In the action, which lasted several hours, we have lost but one man; two others wounded, — one of whom is since dead, the other very slightly wounded. We took of the man-of-war's men thirty-five; several are wounded, and one since dead; twenty-four are sent to head-quarters. The remainder, being impressed from this and neighboring towns, are permitted to return to their friends. This morning Capt. Lindzee warped off with but one-half of his men, with neither a prize-boat nor tender, except a small skiff the wounded lieutenant returned in."

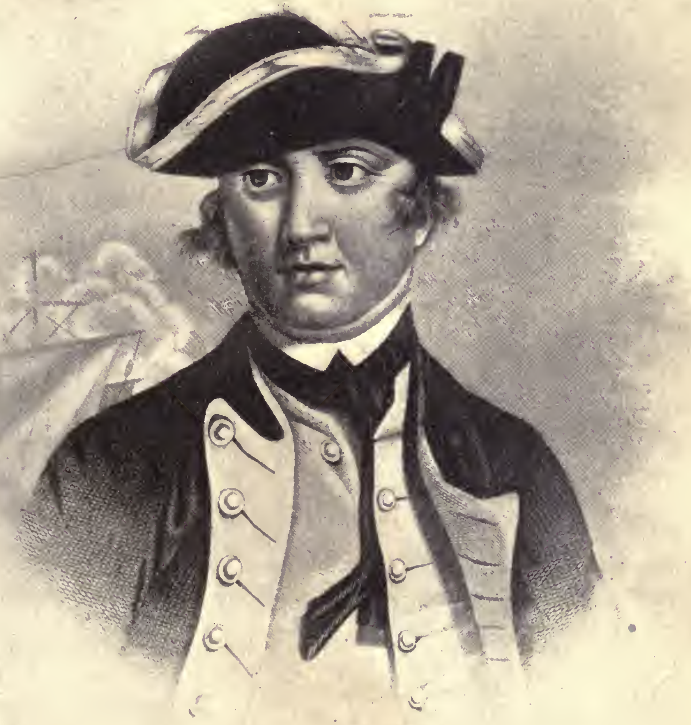
The work done by the small armed schooners of which the "Lee" was a type encouraged Congress to proceed with the work of organizing a regular navy; and by the end of 1775 that body had authorized the building of thirteen war-vessels carrying from twenty-four to thirty-two guns each. But as some naval force was obviously necessary during the construction of this fleet, five vessels were procured, and the new navy was organized with the following roster of officers: —

Esek Hopkins	*Commander-in-chief.*
Dudley Saltonstall	*Captain of the "Alfred."*
Abraham Whipple	*Captain of the "Columbus."*
Nicholas Biddle	*Captain of the "Andrea Doria."*
John B. Hopkins	*Captain of the "Cabot."*

A long list of lieutenants was also provided, among whom stands out boldly the name of John Paul Jones. John Manly, whose dashing work in the shooner "Lee" we have already noticed, was left in command of his little craft until the thirty-two-gun ship "Hancock" was completed, when he was put in charge of her.

It may possibly have occurred to some of my readers to wonder what flag floated from the mastheads of these ships. There is much confusion upon this point, and not a little uncertainty. There were three classes of American armed vessels on the seas. First were the privateers, that sailed under any flag that might suit their purpose. Next came the vessels fitted out and commissioned by the individual colonies; these usually floated the flag of the colony from which they hailed. Last came the vessels commissioned by Congress, which at the outset floated many banners of diverse kinds. It fell to the lot of Lieut. Paul Jones, however, to hoist the first authorized American flag over a regularly commissioned vessel-of-war. This flag was of bunting, showing a pine-tree on a plain white ground, with the words “Liberty Tree” and “Appeal to God” prominently displayed. This flag was chiefly used until the adoption of the stars and stripes. The “rattlesnake flag,” with a reptile in the act of striking, and the legend “Don’t tread on me,” was largely used by the privateers.

The year 1775 closed with but little activity upon the ocean. The ships of the regular navy were late in getting into commission, and an early winter impeded their usefulness. Some little work was done by privateers and the ships of the different colonies, and the ships of the British navy were kept fully occupied in guarding against the operations of these gentry. The man-of-war “Nautilus” chased an American privateer into a little cove near Beverly, and in the heat of the chase both vessels ran aground. The people on shore put off to the privateer, and quickly stripped her of her cordage and armament, and with the guns built a small battery by the water-side, from which they opened a telling fire upon the stranded “Nautilus.” The man-of-war returned in kind, and did some slight damage to the town; but when the tide had risen she slipped her cables and departed. Such desultory encounters were of frequent occurrence, but no naval battles of any importance took place until the spring of 1776.



Esek Hopkins

COMMODORE ESEK HOPKINS

CHAPTER V.

EVENTS OF 1776. — THE FIRST CRUISE OF THE REGULAR NAVY. — THE "LEXINGTON" AND THE "EDWARD." — MUGFORD'S BRAVE FIGHT. — LOSS OF THE "YANKEE HERO." — CAPT. MANLY, AND THE "DEFENCE." — AMERICAN VESSELS IN EUROPEAN WATERS. — GOOD WORK OF THE "LEXINGTON" AND THE "REPRISAL." — THE BRITISH DEFEATED AT CHARLESTON.

THE year 1776 witnessed some good service done for the cause of liberty by the little colonial navy. The squadron, under the command of Ezekiel Hopkins, left the Delaware in February, as soon as the ice had left the river, and made a descent upon the island of New Providence, where the British had established a naval station. The force under Hopkins consisted of seven vessels-of-war, and one despatch-boat. The attack was successful in every way, a landing party of three hundred marines and sailors which was sent ashore meeting with but little resistance from the British garrison. By this exploit, the Americans captured over a hundred cannon, and a great quantity of naval stores.

After this exploit, Hopkins left New Providence, carrying away with him the governor and one or two notable citizens, and continued his cruise. His course was shaped to the northward, and early in April he found himself off the shore of Long Island. He had picked up a couple of insignificant British vessels, — one a tender of six guns, and the other an eight-gun bomb-brig. But his cruise had been mainly barren of results; and his crew, who had looked forward to sharp service and plenty of prize-money, were beginning to grumble. But their inactivity was not of long duration; for, before daylight on the morning of April 6, the lookout at the masthead of the "Alfred" sighted a large ship, bearing down upon the American squadron. The night was clear and beautiful, the wind light, and the sea smooth; and so, although it lacked several hours to daylight, the commanders determined to give battle to the stranger. Soon, therefore, the roll of the drums beating to quarters was heard over the water, and the angry glare of the battle lanterns on the gun-decks made the open ports of the war-ships stand out like fiery eyes against the black hulls. The Englishman, who proved later to be the "Glasgow," twenty guns, carrying one hundred and fifty men, might easily have escaped; but, apparently undaunted by the odds against him, he awaited the attack. The little "Cabot" was the first American ship to open fire on the enemy. Her attack, though sharp and plucky, was injudicious; for two of the Englishman's heavy broadsides were enough to send her out of the battle for repairs. The "Glasgow" and the "Alfred" then took up the fight, and exchanged repeated broadsides; the American vessel suffering the more serious injuries of the two. After some hours of this fighting, the "Glasgow" hauled away, and made good her escape, although she was almost surrounded by the vessels of the American squadron. It would seem that only the most careless seamanship on the part of the Americans could have enabled a twenty-gun vessel to escape from four vessels, each one of which was singly almost a match for her. It is evident that the Continental Congress took the same view of the matter, for Hopkins was soon after dismissed from the service.

This action was little to the credit of the sailors of the colonial navy. Fortunately, a second action during the same month set them in a better light before the people of the country. This was the encounter of the "Lexington," Capt. Barry, with the British vessel "Edward," off the capes of Virginia. The two vessels were laid yard-arm to yard-arm;

and a hot battle ensued, in which the Americans came off the victors. The career of this little American brig was a rather remarkable one. The year following her capture of the "Edward," she was again off the capes of the Delaware, and again fell in with a British ship. This time, however, the Englishman was a frigate, and the luckless "Lexington" was forced to surrender. Her captor left the Americans aboard their own craft, and, putting a prize-crew aboard, ordered them to follow in the wake of the frigate. That night the Americans plotted the recapture of their vessel. By a concerted movement, they overpowered their captors; and the "Lexington" was taken into Baltimore, where she was soon recommissioned, and ordered to cruise in European waters.

Shortly after the battle between the "Lexington" and the "Edward," there was fought in Massachusetts Bay an action in which the Americans showed the most determined bravery, and which for the courage shown, and losses suffered on either side, may well be regarded as the most important of the naval battles of that year. Early in May, a merchant seaman named Mugford had succeeded, after great importunity, in securing the command of the armed vessel "Franklin," a small cruiser mounting only four guns. The naval authorities had been unwilling to give him the command, though he showed great zeal in pressing his suit. Indeed, after the appointment had been made, certain damaging rumors concerning the newly appointed captain reached the ears of the marine committee, and caused them to send an express messenger to Boston to cancel Mugford's commission. But the order arrived too late. Mugford had already fitted out his ship, and sailed. He had been but a few days at sea, when the British ship "Hope," of four hundred tons and mounting six guns, hove in sight. More than this, the lookout reported that the fleet of the British commodore Banks lay but a few miles away, and in plain sight. Many a man would have been daunted by such odds. Not so Capt. Mugford. Mustering his men, he showed them the British ship, told them that she carried heavier metal than the "Franklin," told them that the British fleet lay near at hand, and would doubtless try to take a hand in the engagement; then, having pointed out all the odds against them, he said, "Now, my lads, it's a desperate case; but we can take her, and win lots of glory and prize-money. Will you stand by me?"

The jackies wasted no time in debate, but, cheering lustily for the captain, went to their posts, and made ready for a hot fight. The naval discipline of the present day was little known, and less observed, at that time in the American navy. The perfect order which makes the gun-deck of a ship going into action as quiet and solemn as during Sunday prayers, then gave place to excited talk and bustle. The men stood in crews at the four guns; but most of the jackies were mustered on the forecastle, ready to board. All expected a desperate resistance. Great was their surprise, then, when they were permitted to take a raking position under the stern of the "Hope," and to board her without a shot being fired. But as Mugford, at the head of the boarders, clambered over the taffrail, he heard the captain of the "Hope" order the men to cut the topsail halliards and ties, with the intention of so crippling the ship that the British squadron might overhaul and recapture her.

"Avast there!" bawled Mugford, seeing through the plot in an instant, and clapping a pistol to the head of the captain; "if a knife is touched to those ropes, not a man of this crew shall live."

This threat so terrified the captured sailors, that they relinquished their design; and Mugford, crowding all sail on his prize, soon was bowling along before a stiff breeze, with the British squadron in hot pursuit. An examination of the ship's papers showed her to be the most valuable prize yet taken by the Americans. In her hold were fifteen hundred barrels of powder, a thousand carbines, a great number of travelling carriages for cannon, and a most complete assortment of artillery instruments and pioneer tools. While running for Boston Harbor, through the channel known as Point Shirley gut, the vessel grounded, but was soon floated, and taken safely to her anchorage. Her arrival was most timely, as the American army was in the most dire straits for gunpowder. It may well be imagined that there was no longer any talk about revoking Capt. Mugford's commission.

Mugford remained in port only long enough to take a supply of powder from his prize; then put to sea again. He well knew that the British fleet that had chased him into Boston Harbor was still blockading the harbor's mouth, but he hoped to evade it by going out through a circuitous channel. Unluckily, in thus attempting to avoid the enemy, the "Franklin," ran aground, and there remained hard and fast in full view of the enemy.

He had as consort the privateer schooner "Lady Washington," whose captain, seeing Mugford's dangerous predicament, volunteered to remain near at hand and assist in the defence.

Mugford knew that his case was desperate, and made preparations for a most determined resistance. Swinging his craft around, he mounted all four of his guns on that side which commanded the channel in the direction from which the enemy was expected. Boarding-nettings were triced up, and strengthened with cables and cordage, to make an effective barrier against the assaults of boarders. The men were served with double rations of grog, and set to work sharpening the cutlasses and spears, with which they were well provided. The work of preparation was completed none too soon; for about nine o'clock Mugford heard the rattle of oars in rowlocks, and saw boats gliding towards the "Franklin" through the darkness.

"Boat ahoy!" he challenged. "Keep off, or I shall fire into you."

"Don't fire," was the response; "we are friends from Boston coming to your aid."

"We want none of your aid," cried Mugford with an oath. Then, turning to his crew, he shouted, "Let them have it, boys."

The roar of the cannon then mingled with the rattle of the musketry, the cries of the wounded, and the shouts and curses of the combatants, as the British strove to clamber up the sides of the "Franklin." Not less than two hundred men were engaged on the side of the British, who advanced to the fray in thirteen large barges, many of them carrying swivel guns. Several boats dashed in close under the side of the "Franklin," and their crews strove manfully to board, but were beaten back by the Yankees, who rained cutlass blows upon them. The long pikes with which the Americans were armed proved particularly effective. "One man with that weapon is positive of having killed nine of the enemy," says a newspaper of that day.

Unhappily, however, the heroic Mugford, while urging on his men to a more vigorous resistance, was struck by a musket-ball, which inflicted a mortal wound. At the moment the wound was received, he was reaching out over the quarter to catch hold of the mast of one of the barges, in the hope of upsetting her. As he fell to the deck, he called his first lieutenant, and said, "I am a dead man. Do not give up the vessel; you will be able to beat them off." Nearly forty years after, the heroic Lawrence, dying on the deck of the "Chesapeake," repeated Mugford's words, "Don't give up the ship."

For about half an hour the battle raged fiercely. The British, beaten back with great loss, returned again and again to the attack. The boats would come under the lee of the "Franklin;" but, not being provided with grappling-irons, the British were forced to lay hold of the gunwales of the enemy with their hands, which the Americans promptly lopped off with their cutlasses. Shots from the swivel guns of the Yankee soon stove in two of the boats of the enemy, which sunk, carrying down many of their crew. After nearly an hour of this desperate fighting, the British withdrew, having lost about seventy men. The only loss sustained by the Americans was that of their brave commander Mugford.

About a month after this battle, there occurred off the coast of Massachusetts a battle in which the Americans, though they fought with the most undaunted bravery, were forced to strike their colors to their adversary. The American was the privateer "Yankee Hero" of Newburyport. She sailed from that place for Boston on the 7th of June with only forty men aboard, intending to ship her full complement of one hundred and twenty at Boston. As the "Hero" rounded Cape Ann, she sighted a sail on the horizon, but in her short-handed condition did not think it worth while to give chase. The stranger, however, had caught sight of the "Hero;" and, a fresh southerly breeze springing up, she began to close with the American. As she came closer, Capt. Tracy of the "Yankee Hero" saw that she was a ship-of-war. Despite the desperate efforts of the Americans to escape, their pursuer rapidly overhauled them, and soon coming up within half a mile, opened fire with her bow chasers. The brig returned the fire with a swivel gun, which had little effect. Seeing this, Capt. Tracy ordered the firing to cease until the ships should came to close quarters. The stranger rapidly overhauled the privateer, keeping up all the time a vigorous fire. Tracy with difficulty restrained the ardor of his men, who were anxious to try to cripple their pursuer. When the enemy came within pistol-shot, Tracy saw that the time for action on his part had come, and immediately opened fire with all the guns and small-arms that could be brought to bear. The only possible chance for escape lay in crippling the big craft with a lucky shot; but broadside after broadside was fired, and still the great ship came rushing along in the wake of the flying privateer. Closer and closer drew the bulky man-of-war, until her bow crept past the stern of the "Yankee Hero," and the marines upon her forecastle poured down a destructive volley of musketry upon the brig's crowded deck. The plight of the privateer was now a desperate one. Her heavy antagonist was close alongside, and towered high above her, so that the marines on the quarter-deck and forecastle of the Englishman were on a level with the leading blocks of the Yankee. From the depressed guns of the frigate, a murderous fire poured down upon the smaller craft. For an hour and twenty minutes the two vessels continued the fight, pouring hot broadsides into each other, and separated by less than a hundred feet of water. The brisk breeze blowing carried away the clouds of smoke, and left the men on the deck of the Yankee no protection from sharp-shooters on the enemy's deck. Accordingly, the execution was frightful. Tracy, from his post on the quarter-deck, saw his men falling like sheep, while the continual volleys of the great ship had so cut the cordage of the weaker vessel that escape was impossible. At last a musket-ball struck Capt. Tracy in the thigh, and he fell bleeding to the deck. For a moment his men wavered at their guns; but he called manfully to them, from where he lay, to fight on boldly for the honor of the "Yankee Hero." Two petty officers had rushed to his assistance; and he directed them to lay him upon a chest of arms upon the quarter-deck, whence he might direct the course of the battle. But, strong though was his spirit, his body was too weak to perform the task he had allotted it; and, growing faint from pain and loss of blood, he was carried below.

He lay unconscious for a few minutes, but was recalled to his senses by the piteous cries of wounded men by whom he was surrounded. When he came to himself, he saw the cabin filled with grievously wounded people, bleeding and suffering for lack of surgical aid. The firing of the privateer had ceased, but the enemy was still pouring in pitiless broadsides. Enraged at this spectacle, Capt. Tracy ordered his men to re-open the conflict, and directed that he be taken in a chair to the quarter-deck. But, on getting into the chair, he was suddenly seized with a fainting spell, and gave orders, by signs, that the colors be struck.

When the inequality of the two enemies is considered, this action appears to be a most notable reason for pride in the powers of the Americans. The "Yankee Hero" was a low single-decked vessel of fourteen guns, while her captor was the British frigate of thirty-two guns. Yet the little American vessel had held her own for two hours, and by good gunnery and skilful manœuvring had succeeded in doing almost as much damage as she had suffered.

In reading of the naval engagements of the Revolution, one is impressed with the small sacrifice of life that attended the most protracted conflicts. Thus in the action just recorded only four men were killed upon the defeated ship, although for more than an hour the two vessels had exchanged broadsides a distance of less than a hundred feet apart. The execution done on the British frigate has never been recorded, but was probably even less.

Only the most fragmentary account can be given of any naval actions in the year 1776, except those in which America's great naval hero Paul Jones took part. Of the trivial encounters that go to complete the naval annals of the year, only the briefest recountal is necessary. The work of the little brig "Andrea Doria," Capt. Biddle, deserves a passing mention. This little fourteen-gun craft had the most wonderful luck in making prizes. Besides capturing two transports loaded with British soldiers, she took so many merchantmen, that on one cruise she brought back to port only five of her original crew, the rest having all been put aboard prizes.

On the 17th of June, the crew of the Connecticut cruiser "Defence," a fourteen-gun brig, heard the sound of distant cannonading coming faintly over the water. All sail was crowded upon the brig, and she made all possible speed to the scene of conflict. About nightfall, she fell in with four American schooners that had just been having a tussle with two heavy British transports. Three of the American vessels were privateers, the fourth was the little cruiser "Lee" in which Capt. John Manly had done such brilliant service. The four schooners had found the transports too powerful for them, and had therefore drawn off, but were eager to renew the fray with the help of the "Defence." Accordingly the "Defence" led the way to Nantasket Roads, where the transports lay at anchor. Capt. Harding wasted little time in manœuvring, but, laying his vessel alongside the larger of the two transports, summoned her commander to strike.

"Ay, ay — I'll strike," was the response from the threatened vessel; and instantly a heavy broadside was poured into the "Defence." A sharp action followed, lasting for nearly an hour. The "Defence" bore the brunt of the conflict, for the four schooners did not come to sufficiently close quarters to be of much assistance against the enemy. The gunnery of the Americans proved too much for the enemy, however; and after losing eighteen men, together with a large number wounded, the British surrendered. The American vessel was a good deal cut up aloft, and lost nine of her men. The next morning a third transport was sighted by the "Defence," and speedily overhauled and captured. More than five hundred British soldiers were thus captured; and the British thenceforward dared not treat the Americans as rebels, lest the colonial army authorities should retaliate upon the British prisoners in their hands.

It was in the year 1776 that the first naval vessel giving allegiance to the American Colonies showed herself in European waters. This vessel was the "Reprisal," Capt. Wickes, a small craft, mounting sixteen guns. Early in the summer of '76, the "Reprisal" made a cruise to Martinique, taking several prizes. When near the island, she encountered the British sloop-of-war "Shark," and a sharp battle ensued. In size and weight of metal, the two vessels were about evenly matched; but the "Reprisal" had been sending out so many prize-crews, that she was short eighty men of her full crew. Therefore, when, after a brisk interchange of broadsides, the British sloop sheered off, and left the "Reprisal" to continue her course, Capt. Wickes rejoiced in his escape as being almost equal to a victory.

After completing this cruise, the "Reprisal" was ordered to France for the purpose of conveying thither from Philadelphia Benjamin Franklin, the ambassador sent from the Colonies to interest the French in the cause of American liberty. While on the way over, she took two or three prizes, which were sold in France. After landing her distinguished passenger, she cruised about in the proverbially tempestuous Bay of Biscay, where she forced several British vessels to strike to the American flag, then first seen in those waters. On returning to France to sell his newly captured prizes, Capt. Wickes found trouble in store for him. The British ambassador at Paris had declared that the American cruiser was a detestable pirate; and that for France to permit the pirate to anchor in her harbors, or sell his prizes in her markets, was equal to a declaration of war against England. Wickes was, therefore, admonished to take his ships and prisoners away. But even in that early day Yankee wit was sharp, and able to extricate its possessor from troublesome scrapes. Wickes knew that there were plenty of purchasers to be had for his prizes: so, gathering a few ship-owners together, he took them out to sea beyond the jurisdiction of France, and there sold them to the highest bidder.

The money thus obtained Wickes used in purchasing vessels suitable for armed cruisers. While these were fitting out, the "Lexington" and the "Dolphin" arrived in France, and soon joined the "Reprisal" in a cruise around the British Islands. The little squadron fairly swept the Channel and the Irish Sea of merchantmen. The excitement in England ran high, and the admiralty despatched all the available men-of-war in search of the marauders. But the swift-sailing cruisers escaped all pursuers. Once indeed the "Reprisal" came near falling into the hands of the enemy, but escaped by throwing overboard every thing movable, sawing away her bulwarks, and even cutting away her heavy timbers.

The result of this cruise so aroused England, that France no longer dared to harbor the audacious Yankee cruisers. The "Lexington" and "Reprisal" were, therefore, ordered to leave European waters forthwith. The "Lexington" complied first, and when one day out from the port of Morlaix encountered the British man-of-war cutter "Alert." The "Alert" was the smaller of the two vessels, but her commander had in him all that pluck and those sterling seamanlike qualities that made the name of England great upon the ocean. A stiff breeze was blowing, and a heavy cross sea running, when the two vessels came together. The gunners sighted their pieces at random and fired, knowing little whether the shot would go plunging into the waves, or fly high into the air. As a result, they carried on a spirited cannonade for upwards of two hours, with the sole effect of carrying away the top hamper of the "Alert," and exhausting most of the powder on the American craft.

Finding his ammunition rapidly giving out, the captain of the "Lexington" clapped on all sail, and soon showed his crippled antagonist a clean pair of heels. But so great was the activity of the crew of the "Alert." that they repaired the damage done aloft, and in four hours overtook the "American," and opened fire upon her The battle now became one-sided; for the "Lexington," being short of powder, could make little resistance to the brisk attack of her persevering adversary. In less than an hour she was forced to strike her flag.

The fate of the "Reprisal" was even harder than that of her consort. While crossing the Atlantic on her way back to the coast of America, she was overtaken by a furious gale. With furled sails and battened hatches, the little craft made a desperate fight for life. But the fierce wind carried away her masts and spars, and the tossing waves opened her seams, so that it became apparent to all on board that the fate of the gallant craft, that had so nobly defended the cause of American liberty, was sealed. As the water rose higher and higher in the hold, the officers saw that it was no longer a question of the possibility of saving the ship, but that their lives and those of the crew were in the greatest danger. Boats were lowered; but the angry white-capped waves tossed them madly aloft, and, turning them over and over, sent the poor fellows that manned them to their long account. All hands then set to work at the construction of a huge raft; and just as the ship's stern settled, it was pushed off, and all that could reach it clambered on. A few poor fellows clung to the sinking ship; and their comrades on the raft saw them crowd on the forecastle, and heard their despairing cries as the good ship threw her prow high in the air, and sunk stern foremost to the placid depths of the stormy ocean. But those on the raft were not destined to escape the fate of their comrades. The haggard sufferers were doomed to see the frail structure on which their lives depended go slowly to pieces before the mighty power of the remorseless sea. Bit by bit their foothold vanished from beneath them. One by one they were swept off into the seething cauldron of the storm. At last but one man remained, the cook of the ill-fated vessel, who floated about for three days on a piece of wreckage, until, half-starved and nearly crazed, he was picked up by a passing vessel, and told the tale of the wreck. So ended the career of the patriotic and gallant Capt. Wickes and his crew, and such is the fate that every stout fellow braves when he dons his blue jacket and goes to serve his country on the ocean.

In addition to the exploits of the American cruisers upon the high seas, certain operations of the British navy along the American coast, during the year 1776, demand attention. Of these the most important was the attack by Sir Peter Parker upon Charleston, in September of that year, — an attack made memorable by the determined courage of the Americans, the daring exploit of Sergt. Jasper, and the discovery of the remarkable qualities of palmetto logs as a material for fortifications.

Charleston was then a town of but a few thousand inhabitants; but, small as it was, it had become particularly obnoxious to the British on account of the strong revolutionary sentiment of its people, and their many open acts of defiance of King George's authority. When the offensive Stamp Act first was published, the people of Charleston rose in revolt; and the stamps for the city being stored in an armed fortress in the bay, known as Castle Johnson, a party of a hundred and fifty armed men went down the bay, surprised the garrison, captured the castle, and, loading its guns, defied the authorities. Not until the promise had been made that the stamps should be sent back to England, did the rebellious Carolinians lay down their arms. Nor was their peace of long duration. When the news of the battle of Lexington reached the little Southern seaport, the people straightway cast about for an opportunity to strike a blow against the tyranny of England. The opportunity soon offered itself. An English sloop laden with powder was lying at St. Augustine, Fla. Learning this, the people of Charleston fitted out a vessel, which captured the powder-ship, and, eluding a number of British cruisers, returned safely to Charleston with fifteen thousand pounds of gunpowder for the colonial army. Soon after the colonial troops took possession of the forts in the harbor, and Charleston became a revolutionary stronghold.

Therefore, when the war authorities of Great Britain prepared to take active, offensive measures against the seaport cities of the rebellious colonies, Charleston was one of the first points chosen for attack. It was on the 4th of June, 1776, that the British fleet, under the command of the veteran admiral, Sir Peter Parker, appeared off Charleston bar. The colonists had learned of its approach some time before; and the town was crowded with troops, both regular and volunteer. Two forts, Johnson and Sullivan, were erected at points commanding the entrance to the harbor. Troops were thrown out to oppose the advance of landing parties. The wharves were covered with breastworks, and the streets leading up from the water-side were barricaded. There was a great scarceness of lead for bullets; and to supply that need the leaden sashes, in which window-panes were at that time set, were melted down. When the fleet of the enemy appeared in the offing, Charleston was quite ready to give the invaders a warm reception.

Fort Sullivan was the chief work in the harbor, and against this Parker began a vigorous cannonade early on the morning of the 28th of June. The fort had been built of logs of palmetto wood, and was looked upon with some distrust by its defenders, who did not know how well that material could withstand cannon-shot; but the opening volley of the fleet re-assured them. The balls penetrated deep in the soft, spongy wood without detaching any of the splinters, which, in a battle, are more dangerous than the shot themselves. The fort soon replied to the fire of the fleet; and the thunder of three hundred cannon rang out over the bay, while dense clouds of sulphurous smoke hid the scene from the eager gaze of the crowds of people on the housetops of the city.

When the stately ships of the British squadron swung into line before the little wooden fort, there was hardly a sailor who did not take his station without a feeling of contempt for the insignificant obstacle that they were about to sweep from their path. But as the day wore on, and the ceaseless cannonade seemed to have no effect on the bastions of the fort, the case began to look serious.

"Mind the commodore, and the fifty-gun ships," was the command Moultrie gave to the gunners in the fort when the action commenced, and right well did they heed the injunction. The quarter-decks of the ships-of-the-line were swept clean of officers. The gunners in the fort soon found that the fire of the enemy was doing little or no execution, and they sighted their guns as coolly as though out for a day's target practice. The huge iron balls crashed through the hulls of the ships, or swept their decks, doing terrific execution. The cable of the "Bristol" was shot away, and she swung round with her stern to the fort. In this position she was raked repeatedly; her captain was killed, and at one time not an officer remained on her quarter-deck except the admiral

Sir Peter Parker. When the conflict ceased, this ship alone contained forty killed and seventy-one wounded men. The other ships suffered nearly as severely. The twenty-eight-gun ship "Actæon" grounded during the course of the engagement; and when, after ten hours' fruitless cannonading, the British abandoned the task of reducing the fort, and determined to withdraw, she was found to be immovable. Accordingly Admiral Parker signalled to her officer to abandon the ship, and set her on fire. This was accordingly done; and the ship was left with her colors flying, and her guns loaded. This movement was observed by the Americans, who, in spite of the danger of an explosion, boarded the ship, fired her guns at the "Bristol," loaded three boats with stores, and pulled away, leaving the "Actæon" to blow up, which she did half an hour later.

While the battle was at its hottest, and the shot and shell were flying thick over the fort, the flagstaff was shot away; and the flag of South Carolina, a blue ground, bearing a silver crescent, fell on the beach outside the parapet. Sergt. William Jasper, seeing this, leaped on the bastion, walked calmly through the storm of flying missiles, picked up the flag, and fastened it upon a sponge-staff. Then standing upon the highest point of the parapet, in full view of the ships and the men in the fort, he calmly fixed the staff upright, and returned to his place, leaving the flag proudly waving. The next day the governor of the colony visited the fort, and seeking out the brave sergeant, handed him a handsome sword and a lieutenant's commission. But Jasper proved to be as modest as he was brave; for he declined the proffered promotion, with the remark, —

"I am not fit to keep officers' company; I am but a sergeant."

The complete failure of the attack upon Charleston was a bitter pill for the English to swallow. They had brought against the raw, untrained forces of the colony some of the finest ships of the boasted navy of Great Britain. They had fought well and pluckily. The fact that Sir Peter Parker was in command was in itself a guaranty that the attack would be a spirited one; and the tremendous loss of life in the fleet affords convincing proof that no poltroonery lurked among the British sailors. The loss of the British during the engagement, in killed and wounded, amounted to two hundred and twenty-five men. The Americans had ten men killed and twenty-two wounded. Moultrie, the commandant of the fort, says that after the battle was over they picked up more than twelve hundred solid shot of different sizes, and many thirteen-inch shells. Most of the shells that fell within the fort fell into a large pool of water, which extinguished their fuses, thus robbing them of their power for evil.

In his report of this battle, Admiral Parker fell into a queer error. He reports that a large party of men entering the fort met a man going out, whom they straightway hanged to a neighboring tree, in full view of the fleet. From this the admiral concluded that there was an incipient mutiny in the fort, and the ringleader was hanged as an example. Col. Moultrie, however, explained this by stating that the man hanging in the tree was simply the coat of a soldier, which had been carried away by a cannon-shot, and left hanging in the branches.

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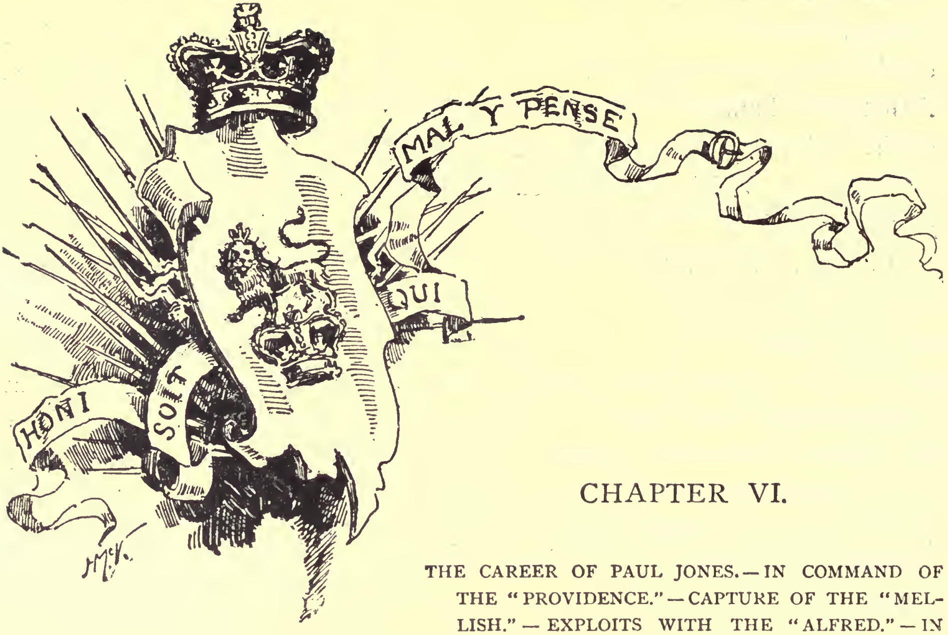
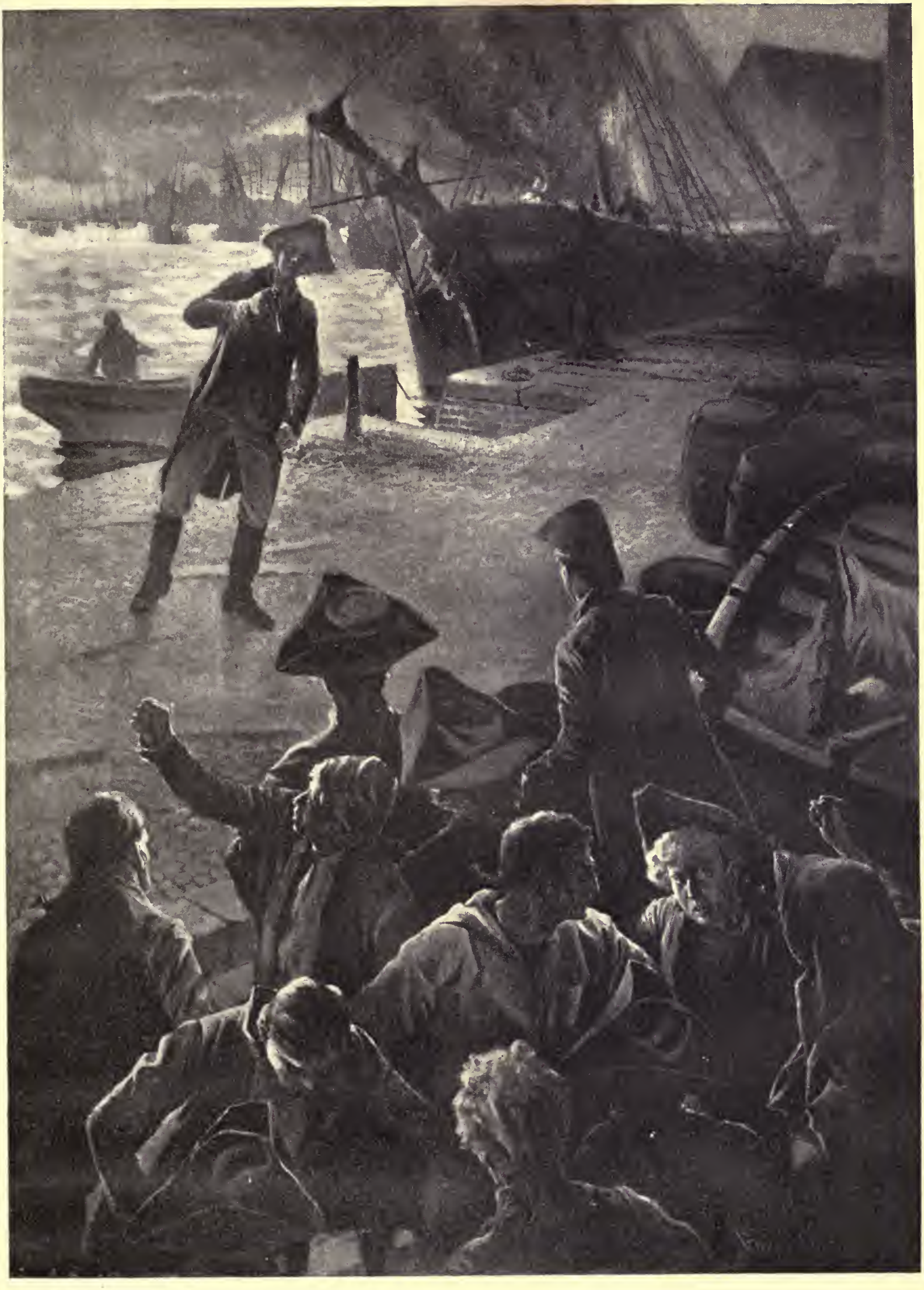


CHAPTER VI.

THE CAREER OF PAUL JONES.—IN COMMAND OF THE "PROVIDENCE."—CAPTURE OF THE "MELLISH." — EXPLOITS WITH THE "ALFRED."—IN COMMAND OF THE "RANGER."—SWEEPING THE ENGLISH CHANNEL. — THE DESCENT UPON WHITEHAVEN.

WE HAVE already spoken of the farcical affair between the fleet under Ezekiel Hopkins and the English frigate "Glasgow," in which the English vessel, by superior seamanship, and taking advantage of the blunders of the Americans, escaped capture. The primary result of this battle was to cause the dismissal from the service of Hopkins. But his dismissal led to the advancement of a young naval officer, whose name became one of the most glorious in American naval annals, and whose fame as a skilful seaman has not been tarnished by the hand of time.

At the time of the escape of the "Glasgow," there was serving upon the "Alfred" a young lieutenant, by name John Paul Jones. Jones was a Scotchman. His rightful name was John Paul; but for some reason, never fully understood, he had assumed the surname of Jones, and his record under the name of Paul Jones forms one of the most glorious chapters of American naval history. When given a lieutenant's commission in the colonial navy, Jones was twenty-nine years old. From the day when a lad of thirteen years he shipped for his first voyage, he had spent



CAPTAIN JOHN PAUL JONES QUELLING THE MOB
AT WHITE HAVEN, SCOTLAND, NOV., 1777

his life on the ocean. He had served on peaceful merchantmen, and in the less peaceful, but at that time equally respectable, slave-trade. A small inheritance had enabled him to assume the station of a Virginia gentleman; and he had become warmly attached to American ideas and principles, and at the outbreak of the Revolution put his services at the command of Congress. He was first offered a captain's commission with the command of the "Providence," mounting twelve guns and carrying one hundred men. But with extraordinary modesty the young sailor declined, saying that he hardly felt himself fitted to discharge the duties of a first lieutenant. The lieutenant's commission, however, he accepted; and it was in this station that with his own hands he hoisted the first American flag to the masthead of the "Alfred."

The wretched fiasco which attended the attack of the American fleet upon the "Glasgow" was greatly deplored by Jones. However, he refrained from any criticism upon his superiors, and sincerely regretted the finding of the court of inquiry, by which the captain of the "Providence" was dismissed the service, and Lieut. Paul Jones recommended to fill the vacancy.

The duties which devolved upon Capt. Jones were manifold and arduous. The ocean was swarming with powerful British men-of-war, which in his little craft he must avoid, while keeping a sharp outlook for foemen with whom he was equally matched. More than once, from the masthead of the "Providence," the lookout could discover white sails of one or more vessels, any one of which, with a single broadside, could have sent the audacious Yankee to the bottom. But luckily the "Providence" was a fast sailer, and wonderfully obedient to her helm. To her good sailing qualities, and to his own admirable seamanship, Jones owed more than one fortunate escape. Once, when almost overtaken by a powerful man-of-war, he edged away until he brought his pursuer on his weather quarter; then, putting his helm up suddenly, he stood dead before the wind, thus doubling on his course, and running past his adversary within pistol-shot of her guns, but in a course directly opposite to that upon which she was standing. The heavy war-ship went plunging ahead like a heavy hound eluded by the agile fox, and the Yankee proceeded safely on her course.

Some days later the "Providence" was lying to on the great banks near the Isle of Sables. It was a holiday for the crew; for no sails were in sight, and Capt. Jones had indulgently allowed them to get out their cod-lines and enjoy an afternoon's fishing. In the midst of their sport, as they were hauling in the finny monsters right merrily, the hail of the lookout warned them that a strange sail was in sight. The stranger drew rapidly nearer, and was soon made out to be a war-vessel. Jones, finding after a short trial that his light craft could easily outstrip the lumbering man-of-war, managed to keep just out of reach. Now and then the pursuer would luff up and let fly a broadside; the shot skipping along over the waves, but sinking before they reached the "Providence." Jones, who had an element of humor in his character, responded to this cannonade with one musket, which, with great solemnity, was discharged in response to each broadside. After keeping up this burlesque battle for some hours, the "Providence" spread her sails, and soon left her foe hull down beneath the horizon.

After having thus eluded his pursuer, Jones skirted the coast of Cape Breton, and put into the harbor of Canso, where he found three British fishing schooners lying at anchor. The inhabitants of the little fishing village were electrified to see the "Providence" cast anchor in the harbor, and, lowering her boats, send two crews of armed sailors to seize the British craft. No resistance was made, however; and the Americans burned one schooner, scuttled a second, and after filling the third with fish, taken from the other two, took her out of the harbor with the "Providence" leading the way.

From the crew of the captured vessel, Jones learned that at the Island of Madame, not far from Canso, there was a considerable flotilla of British merchantmen. Accordingly he proceeded thither with the intention of destroying them. On arriving, he found the harbor too shallow to admit the "Providence;" and accordingly taking up a position from which he could, with his cannon, command the harbor, he despatched armed boats' crews to attack the shipping. On entering the harbor, the Americans found nine British vessels lying at anchor. Ships and brigs, as well as small fishing schooners, were in the fleet. It was a rich prize for the Americans, and it was won without bloodshed; for the peaceful fishermen offered no resistance to the Yankees, and looked upon the capture of their vessels with amazement. The condition of these poor men, thus left on a bleak coast with no means of escape, appealed strongly to Jones's humanity. He therefore told them, that, if they would assist him in making ready for sea such of the prizes as he wished to take with him, he would leave them vessels enough to carry them back to England. The fishermen heartily agreed to the proposition, and worked faithfully for several days at the task of fitting out the captured vessels. The night before the day on which Jones had intended leaving the harbor, the wind came on to blow, and a violent storm of wind and rain set in. Even the usually calm surface of the little harbor was lashed to fury by the shrieking wind. The schooner "Sea-Flower" — one of the captured prizes — was torn from her moorings; and though her crew got out the sweeps, and struggled valiantly for headway against the driving storm, she drifted on shore, and lay there a total wreck. The schooner "Ebenezer," which Jones had brought from Canso laden with fish, drifted on a sunken reef, and was there so battered by the roaring waves that she went to pieces. Her crew, after vainly striving to launch the boats, built a raft, and saved themselves on that.

The next day the storm abated; and Capt. Jones, taking with him three heavily laden prizes, left the harbor, and turned his ship's prow homeward. The voyage to Newport, then the headquarters of the little navy, was made without other incident than the futile chase of three British ships, which ran into the harbor of Louisbourg. On his arrival, Jones reported that he had been cruising for forty-seven days, and in that time had captured sixteen prizes, beside the fishing-vessels he burned at Cape Breton. Eight of his prizes he had manned, and sent into port; the remainder he had burned. It was the first effective blow the colonists had yet struck at their powerful foe upon the ocean.

Hardly had Paul Jones completed this first cruise, when his mind, ever active in the service of his country, suggested to him a new enterprise in which he might contribute to the cause of American liberty. At this early period of the Revolution, the British were treating American prisoners with almost inconceivable barbarity. Many were sent to the "Old Jersey" prison-ship, of whose horrors we shall read something later on. Others, to the number of about a hundred, were taken to Cape Breton, and forced to labor like Russian felons in the underground coal-mines. Jones's plan was bold in its conception, but needed only energy and promptitude to make it perfectly feasible.

He besought the authorities to give him command of a squadron, that he might move on Cape Breton, destroy the British coal and fishing vessels always congregated there, and liberate the hapless Americans who were passing their lives in the dark misery of underground mining. His plan was received with favor, but the authorities lacked the means to give him the proper aid. However, two vessels, the "Alfred" and the "Providence," were assigned to him; and he went speedily to work to prepare for the adventure. At the outset, he was handicapped by lack of men. The privateers were then fitting out in every port; and seamen saw in privateering easier service, milder discipline, and greater profits than they could hope for in the regular navy. When, by hard work, the muster-roll of the "Alfred" showed her full complement of men shipped, the stormy month of November had arrived, and the golden hour for success was past.

Nevertheless, Jones, taking command of the "Alfred," and putting the "Providence" in the command of Capt. Hacker, left Newport, and laid his course to the northward. When he arrived off the entrance to the harbor of Louisbourg, he was so lucky as to encounter an English brig, the "Mellish," which, after a short resistance, struck her flag. She proved to be laden with heavy warm clothing for the British troops in Canada. This capture was a piece of great good fortune for the Americans, and many a poor fellow in Washington's army that winter had cause to bless Paul Jones for his activity and success.

The day succeeding the capture of the "Mellish" dawned gray and cheerless. Light flurries of snow swept across the waves, and by noon a heavy snowstorm, driven by a violent north-east gale, darkened the air, and lashed the waves into fury. Jones stood dauntless at his post on deck, encouraging the sailors by cheery words, and keeping the sturdy little vessel on her course. All day and night the storm roared; and when, the next morning, Jones, wearied by his ceaseless vigilance, looked anxiously across the waters for his consort, she was not to be seen. The people on the "Alfred" supposed, of course, that the "Providence" was lost, with all on board, and mourned the sad fate of their comrades. But, in fact, Capt. Hacker, affrighted by the storm, had basely deserted his leader during the night, and made off for Newport, leaving Jones to prosecute his enterprise alone.

Jones recognized in this desertion the knell of the enterprise upon which he had embarked. Nevertheless, he disdained to return to port: so sending the "Mellish" and a second prize, which the British afterwards recaptured, back to Massachusetts, he continued his cruise along the Nova Scotia coast. Again he sought out the harbor of Canso, and, entering it, found a large English transport laden with provisions aground just inside the bar. Boats' crews from the "Alfred" soon set the torch to the stranded ship, and then, landing, fired a huge warehouse filled with whale-oil and the products of the fisheries. Leaving the blazing pile behind, the "Alfred" put out again into the stormy sea, and made for the northward.

As he approached Louisbourg, Jones fell in with a considerable fleet of British coal-vessels, in convoy of the frigate "Flora." A heavy fog hung over the ocean; and the fleet Yankee, flying here and there, was able to cut out and capture three of the vessels without alarming the frigate, that continued unsuspectingly on her course. Two days later, Jones snapped up a Liverpool privateer, that fired scarcely a single gun in resistance. Then crowded with prisoners, embarrassed by prizes, and short of food and water, the "Alfred turned her course homeward.

Five valuable prizes sailed in her wake. Anxiety for the safety of these gave Jones no rest by day or night. He was ceaselessly on the watch lest some hostile man-of-war should overhaul his fleet, and force him to abandon his hard-won fruits of victory. All went well until, when off St. George's Bank, he encountered the frigate "Milford," — the same craft to whose cannon-balls Jones, but a few months before, had tauntingly responded with musket-shots.

It was late in the afternoon when the "Milford" was sighted; and Jones, seeing that she could by no possibility overtake his squadron before night, ordered his prizes to continue their course without regard to any lights or apparent signals from the "Alfred." When darkness fell upon the sea, the Yankees were scudding along on the starboard tack, with the Englishman coming bravely up astern. From the tops of the "Alfred" swung two burning lanterns, which the enemy doubtless pronounced a bit of beastly stupidity on the part of the Yankee, affording, as it did, an excellent guide for the pursuer to steer by. But during the night the wily Jones changed his course. The prizes, with the exception of the captured privateer, continued on the starboard tack. The "Alfred" and the privateer made off on the port tack, with the "Milford" in full cry in their wake. Not until the morning dawned did the Englishman discover how he had been tricked.

Having thus secured the safety of his prizes, it only remained for Jones to escape with the privateer. Unluckily, however, the officer put in charge of the privateer proved incapable, and his craft fell into hands of the British. Jones, however, safely carried the "Alfred" clear of the "Milford's" guns, and, a heavy storm coming up, soon eluded his foe in the snow and darkness. Thereupon he shaped his course for Boston, where he arrived on the 5th of December, 1776. Had he been delayed two days longer, both his provisions and his water would have been exhausted.

For the ensuing six months Jones remained on shore, not by any means inactive, for his brain was teeming with great projects for his country's service. He had been deprived of the command of the "Alfred," and another ship was not easily to be found: so he turned his attention to questions of naval organization, and the results of many of his suggestions are observable in the United States navy to-day. It was not until June 14, 1777, that a command was found for him. This was the eighteen-gun ship "Ranger," built to carry a frigate's battery of twenty-six guns. She had been built for the revolutionary government, at Portsmouth, and was a stanch-built, solid craft, though miserably slow and somewhat crank. Jones, though disappointed with the sailing qualities of the craft, was nevertheless vastly delighted to be again in command of a man-of-war, and wasted no time in getting her ready for sea.

It so happened, that, on the very day Paul Jones received his commission as commander of the "Ranger," the Continental Congress adopted the Stars and Stripes for the national flag. Jones, anticipating this action, had prepared a flag in accordance with the proposed designs, and, upon hearing of the action of Congress, had it run to the masthead, while the cannon of the "Ranger" thundered out their deep-mouthed greetings to the starry banner destined to wave over the most glorious nation of the earth. Thus it happened that the same hand that had given the pine-tree banner to the winds was the first to fling out to the breezes the bright folds of the Stars and Stripes.

Early in October the "Ranger" left Portsmouth, and made for the coast of France. Astute agents of the Americans in that country were having a fleet, powerful frigate built there for Jones, which he was to take, leaving the sluggish "Ranger" to be sold. But, on his arrival at Nantes, Jones was grievously disappointed to learn that the British Government had so vigorously protested against the building of a vessel-of-war in France for the Americans, that the French Government had been obliged to notify the American agents that their plan must be abandoned. France was at this time at peace with Great Britain, and, though inclined to be friendly with the rebellious colonies, was not ready to entirely abandon her position as a neutral power. Later, when she took up arms against England, she gave the Americans every right in her ports they could desire.

Jones thus found himself in European waters with a vessel too weak to stand against the frigates England could send to take her, and too slow to elude them. But he determined to strike some effective blows for the cause of liberty. Accordingly he planned an enterprise, which, for audacity of conception and dash in execution, has never been equalled by any naval expedition since.

This was nothing less than a virtual invasion of England. The "Ranger" lay at Brest. Jones planned to dash across the English Channel, and cruise along the coast of England, burning shipping and towns, as a piece of retaliation upon the British for their wanton outrages along the American coast. It was a bold plan. The channel was thronged with the heavy frigates of Great Britain, any one of which could have annihilated the audacious Yankee cruiser. Nevertheless, Jones determined to brave the danger.

At the outset, it seemed as though his purpose was to be balked by heavy weather. For days after the "Ranger" left Brest, she battled against the chop-seas of the English Channel. The sky was dark, and the light of the sun obscured by gray clouds. The wind whistled through the rigging, and tore at the tightly furled sails. Great green walls of water, capped with snowy foam, beat thunderously against the sides of the "Ranger." Now and then a port would be driven in, and the men between decks drenched by the incoming deluge. The "Ranger" had encountered an equinoctial gale in its worst form.

When the gale died away, Jones found himself off the Scilly Islands, in full view of the coast of England. Here he encountered a merchantman, which he took and scuttled, sending the crew ashore to spread the news that an American man-of-war was ravaging the channel. Having alarmed all England, he changed his hunting-ground to St. George's Channel and the Irish Sea, where he captured several ships; sending one, a prize, back to Brest. He was in waters with which he had been familiar from his youth, and he made good use of his knowledge; dashing here and there, lying in wait in the highway of commerce, and then secreting himself in some sequestered cove while the enemy's ship-of-war went by in fruitless search for the marauder. All England was aroused by the exploits of the Yankee cruiser. Never since the days of the Invincible Armada had war been so brought home to the people of the tight little island. Long had the British boastfully claimed the title of monarch of the seas. Long had they sung the vainglorious song,—

"Britannia needs no bulwarks,
No towers along the steep;
Her march is o'er the mountain waves,
Her home is on the deep."

But Paul Jones showed Great Britain that her boasted power was a bubble. He ravaged the seas within cannon-shot of English headlands. He captured and burned merchantmen, drove the rates of insurance up to panic prices, paralyzed British shipping-trade, and even made small incursions into British territory.

The reports that reached Jones of British barbarity along the American coast, of the burning of Falmouth, of tribute levied on innumerable seaport towns,—all aroused in him a determination to strike a retaliatory blow. Whitehaven, a small seaport, was the spot chosen by him for attack; and he brought his ship to off the mouth of the harbor late one night, intending to send in a boat's crew to fire the shipping. But so strong a wind sprung up, as to threaten to drive the ship ashore; and Jones was forced to make sail, and get an offing. A second attempt, made upon a small harbor called Lochryan, on the western coast of Scotland, was defeated by a like cause.

But the expedition against Lochryan, though in itself futile, was the means of giving Jones an opportunity to show his merits as a fighter. Soon after leaving Lochryan, he entered the bay of Carrichfergus, on which is situated the Irish commercial city of Belfast. The bay was constantly filled with merchantmen; and the "Ranger," with her ports closed, and her warlike character carefully disguised, excited no suspicion aboard a trim, heavy-built craft that lay at anchor a little farther up the bay. This craft was the British man-of-war "Drake," mounting twenty guns. Soon after his arrival in the bay, Jones learned the character of the "Drake," and determined to attempt her capture during the night. Accordingly he dropped anchor near by, and, while carefully concealing the character of his craft, made every preparation for a midnight fight. The men sat between decks, sharpening cutlasses, and cleaning and priming their pistols; the cannon were loaded with grape, and depressed for work at close quarters; battle lanterns were hung in place, ready to be lighted at the signal for action.

At ten o'clock, the tramp of men about the capstan gave notice that the anchor was being brought to the catheads. Soon the creaking of cordage, and the snapping of the sails, told that the fresh breeze was being caught by the spreading sails. Then the waves rippled about the bow of the ship, and the "Ranger" was fairly under way.

It was a pitch-dark night, but the lights on board the "Drake" showed where she was lying. On the "Ranger" all lights were extinguished, and no noise told of her progress towards her enemy. It was the captain's plan to run his vessel across the "Drake's" cable, drop his own anchor, let the "Ranger" swing alongside the Englishman, and then fight it out at close quarters. But this plan, though well laid, failed of execution. The anchor was not let fall in season; and the "Ranger," instead of bringing up alongside her enemy, came to anchor half a cable-length astern. The swift-flowing tide and the fresh breeze made it impossible to warp the ship alongside: so Jones ordered the cable cut, and the "Ranger" scudded down the bay before the ever-freshening gale. It does not appear that the people on the "Drake" were aware of the danger they so narrowly escaped.

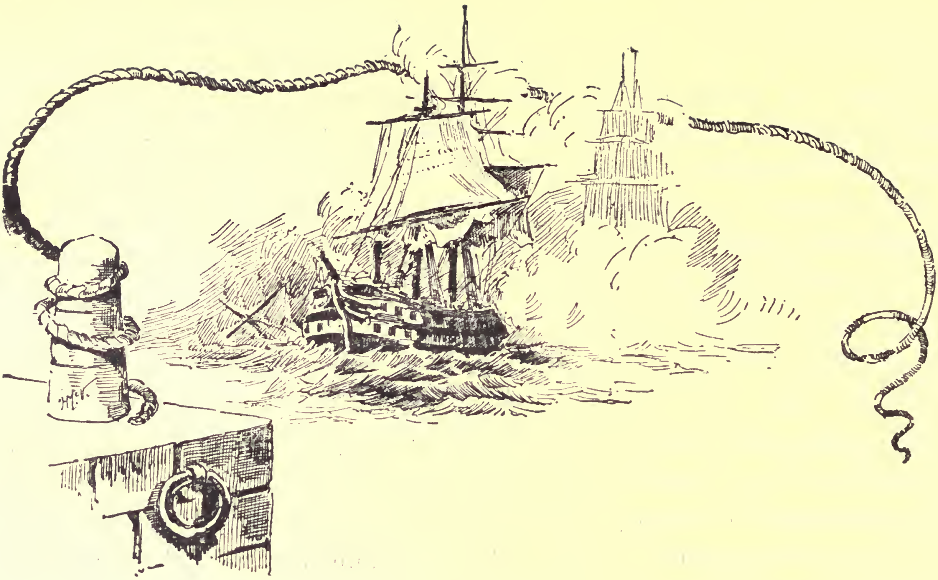
The wind that had aided the tide in defeating Jones's enterprise blew stronger and stronger, and before morning the sea was tossing before a regular north-east gale. Against it the "Ranger" could make no headway: so Jones gave his ship her head, and scudded before the wind until within the vicinity of Whitehaven, when he determined to again attempt to destroy the shipping in that port. This time he was successful. Bringing the "Ranger" to anchor near the bar, Capt. Jones called for volunteers to accompany him on the expedition. He himself was to be their leader; for as a boy he had often sailed in and out of the little harbor, knew where the forts stood, and where the colliers anchored most thickly. The landing party was divided into two boat-loads; Jones taking command of one, while Lieut. Wallingford held the tiller of the other boat. With muffled oars the Americans made for the shore, the boats' keels grated upon the pebbly shore, and an instant later the adventurers had scaled the ramparts of the forts, and had made themselves masters of the garrisons. All was done quietly. The guns in the fortifications were spiked; and, leaving the few soldiers on guard gagged and bound, Jones and his followers hastened down to the wharves to set fire to the shipping.

In the harbor were not less than two hundred and twenty vessels, large and small. On the north side of the harbor, near the forts, were about one hundred and fifty vessels. These Jones undertook to destroy. The others were left to Lieut. Wallingford, with his boat's crew of fifteen picked men.

When Jones and his followers reached the cluster of merchantmen, they found their torches so far burned out as to be useless. Failure stared them in the face then, when success was almost within their grasp. Jones, however, was not to be balked of his prey. Running his boat ashore, he hastened to a neighboring house, where he demanded candles. With these he returned, led his men aboard a large ship from which the crew fled, and deliberately built a fire in her hold. Lest the fire should go out, he found a barrel of tar, and threw it upon the flames. Then with the great ship roaring and crackling, and surrounded by scores of other vessels in danger from the flames, Jones withdrew, thinking his work complete.

Many writers have criticised Paul Jones for not having stayed longer to complete the destruction of the vessels in the harbor. But, with the gradually brightening day, his position, which was at the best very dangerous, was becoming desperate. There were one hundred and fifty vessels in that part of the harbor; the crews averaged ten men to a vessel: so that nearly fifteen hundred men were opposed to the plucky little band of Americans. The roar of the fire aroused the people of the town, and they rushed in crowds to the wharf. In describing the affair Jones writes, "The inhabitants began to appear in thousands, and individuals ran hastily toward us. I stood between them and the ship on fire, with my pistol in my hand, and ordered them to stand, which they did with some precipitation. The sun was a full hour's march above the horizon; and, as sleep no longer ruled the world, it was time to retire. We re-embarked without opposition, having released a number of prisoners, as our boats could not carry them. After all my people had embarked, I stood upon the pier for a considerable space, yet no person advanced. I saw all the eminences round the town covered with the amazed inhabitants."

As his boat drew away from the blazing shipping, Jones looked anxiously across the harbor to the spot to which Lieut. Wallingford had been despatched. But no flames were seen in that quarter; for, Wallingford's torches having gone out, he had abandoned the enterprise. And so the Americans, having regained their ship, took their departure, leaving only one of the enemy's vessels burning. A most lame and impotent conclusion it was indeed; but, as Jones said, "What was done is sufficient to show that not all the boasted British navy is sufficient to protect their own coasts, and that the scenes of distress which they have occasioned in America may soon be brought home to their own doors."



CHAPTER VII.

CAREER OF PAUL JONES CONTINUED.—HIS DESCENT UPON THE CASTLE OF LORD SELKIRK—THE AFFAIR OF THE PLATE.—THE DESCENT UPON WHITEHAVEN.—THE BATTLE WITH THE "DRAKE."—LIEUT. SIMPSON'S PERFIDY.

WE NOW come to the glorious part of the career of Paul Jones upon the ocean. Heretofore he has been chiefly occupied in the capture of defenceless merchantmen. His work has been that of the privateer, even if not of the pirate that the British have always claimed he was. But the time came when Jones proved that he was ready to fight an adversary of his mettle; was willing to take heavy blows, and deal stunning ones in return. His daring was not confined to dashing expeditions in which the danger was chiefly overcome by spirit and rapid movements. While this class of operations was ever a favorite with the doughty seaman, he was not at all averse to the deadly naval duel.

We shall for a time abandon our account of the general naval incidents of the Revolution, to follow the career of Paul Jones to the end of the war. His career is not only the most interesting, but the most important, feature of the naval operations of that war. He stands out alone, a grand figure in naval history, as does Decatur in the wars with the Barbary pirates, or Farragut in the war for the Union. The war of 1812 affords no such example of single greatness in the navy. There we find Perry, McDonough, and Porter, all equally great. But in '76 there was no one to stand beside Paul Jones.

When the "Ranger" left the harbor of Whitehaven, her captain was heavy hearted. He felt that he had had the opportunity to strike a heavy blow at the British shipping, but had nevertheless inflicted only a trifling hurt. Angry with himself for not having better planned the adventure, and discontented with his lieutenant for not having by presence of mind prevented the fiasco, he felt that peace of mind could only be obtained by some deed of successful daring.

He was cruising in seas familiar to him as a sailor. Along the Scottish shores his boyhood hours had been spent. This knowledge he sought to turn to account. From the deck of his ship, he could see the wooded shores of St. Mary's Island, on which were the landed estates of Lord Selkirk, a British noble of ancient lineage and political prominence. On the estate of this nobleman Paul Jones was born, and there he passed the few years of his life that elapsed before he forsook the land for his favorite element.

Leaning against the rail on the quarter-deck of the "Ranger," Jones could see through his spy-glass the turrets and spires of Lord Selkirk's castle. As he gazed, there occurred to him the idea, that if he could send a landing party ashore, seize the castle, capture the peer, and bear him off into captivity, he would not only strike terror into the hearts of the British, but would give the Americans a prisoner who would serve as a hostage to secure good treatment for the hapless Americans who had fallen into the hands of the enemy.

With Jones, the conception of a plan was followed by its swift execution. Disdaining to wait for nightfall, he chose two boats' crews of tried and trusty men, and landed. The party started up the broad and open highway leading to the castle. They had gone but a few rods, however, when they encountered two countrymen, who stared a moment at the force of armed men, and then turned in fear to escape.

"Halt!" rang out the clear voice of the leader of the blue-jackets; and the peasants fell upon their faces in abject terror. Jones directed that they be brought to him; and he questioned them kindly, setting their minds at rest, and learning from them much of the castle and its inmates.

Lord Selkirk was away from home. This to Jones was bitter news. It seemed as though some evil genius was dogging his footsteps, bringing failure upon his most carefully planned enterprises. But he was not a man to repine over the inevitable, and he promptly ordered his men to the right about, and made for the landing-place again.

But the sailors were not so unselfish in their motives as their captain. They had come ashore expecting to plunder the castle of the earl, and they now murmured loudly over the abandonment of the adventure. They saw the way clear before them. No guards protected the house. The massive ancestral plate, with which all English landed families are well provided, was unprotected by bolts or bars. They felt that, in retreating, they were throwing away a chance to despoil their enemy, and enrich themselves.

Jones felt the justice of the complaint of the sailors; but only after a fierce struggle with his personal scruples could he yield the point. The grounds of the Earl of Selkirk had been his early playground. A lodge on the vast estate had been his childhood's home. Lady Selkirk had shown his family many kindnesses. To now come to her house as a robber and pillager, seemed the blackest ingratitude; but, on the other hand, he had no right to permit his personal feelings to interfere with his duty to the crew. The sailors had followed him into danger many a time, and this was their first opportunity for financial reward. And, even if it was fair to deny them this chance to make a little prize-money, it would hardly be safe to sow the seeds of discontent among the crew while on a cruise in waters infested with the enemy's ships. With a sigh Jones abandoned his intention of protecting the property of Lady Selkirk, and ordered his lieutenant to proceed to the castle, and capture the family plate. Jones himself returned to the ship, resolved to purchase the spoils at open sale, and return them to their former owner.

The blue-jackets continued their way up the highway, and, turning aside where a heavy gate opened into a stately grove, demanded of an old man who came, wondering, out of the lodge, that he give them instant admittance. Then, swinging into a trot, they ran along the winding carriage-drive until they came out on the broad lawn that extended in front of the castle. Here for the first time they were seen by the inmates of the castle; and faint screams of fear, and shouts of astonishment, came from the open windows of the stately pile. The men-servants came rushing out to discover who the lawless crowd that so violated the sanctity of an English earl's private park could be; but their curiosity soon abated when a few stout blue-jackets, cutlass and pistol in hand, surrounded them, and bade them keep quiet. The lieutenant, with two stout seamen at his back, then entered the castle, and sought out the mistress, who received him with calm courtesy, with a trace of scorn, but with no sign of fear.

Briefly the lieutenant told his errand. The countess gave an order to a butler, and soon a line of stout footmen entered, bearing the plate. Heavy salvers engraved with the family arms of Lord Selkirk, quaint drinking-cups and flagons curiously carved, ewers, goblets, platters, covers, dishes, teapots, and all kinds of table utensils were there, all of exquisitely artistic workmanship, and bearing the stamp of antiquity. When all was ready, the lieutenant called in two of the sailors from the lawn; and soon the whole party, bearing the captured treasure, disappeared in the curves of the road.

This incident, simple enough in reality, the novelist Fenimore Cooper has made the germ of one of his exquisite sea-tales, "The Pilot." British historians have made of it an example by which to prove the lawlessness and base ingratitude of Paul Jones. As may readily be imagined, it stirred up at the time the most intense excitement in England. Jones became the bugbear of timid people. His name was used to frighten little children. He was called pirate, traitor, free-booter, plunderer. It was indeed a most audacious act that he had committed. Never before or since had the soil of England been trodden by a hostile foot. Never had a British peer been forced to feel that his own castle was not safe from the invader. Jones, with his handful of American tars, had accomplished a feat which had never before been accomplished, and which no later foeman of England has dared to repeat. It is little wonder that the British papers described him as a bloodthirsty desperado.

A few weeks later, the captured plate was put up for sale by the prize agents. Capt. Jones, though not a rich man, bought it, and returned it to the countess. Lord Selkirk, in acknowledging its receipt, wrote, —

"And on all occasions, both now and formerly, I have done you the justice to tell that you made an offer of returning the plate very soon after your return to Brest; and although you yourself were not at my house, but remained at the shore with your boat, that you had your officers and men in such extraordinary good discipline, that your having given them the strictest orders to behave well, — to do no injury of any kind, to make no search, but only to bring off what plate was given them, — that in reality they did exactly as was ordered; and that not one man offered to stir from his post on the outside of the house, nor entered the doors, nor said an uncivil word; that the two officers stayed not one-quarter of an hour in the parlor and in the butler's pantry while the butler got the plate together, behaved politely, and asked for nothing but the plate, and instantly marched their men off in regular order; and that both officers and men behaved in all respects so well, that it would have done credit to the best-disciplined troops whatever."

But the British took little notice of the generous reparation made by Capt. Jones, and continued to hurl abuse and hard names at him.

Jones was vastly disappointed at his failure to capture the person of Lord Selkirk. The story of the sufferings of his countrymen in British prisons worked upon his heart, and he longed to take captive a personage whom he could hold as hostage. But, soon after leaving St. Mary's Isle, he fell in again with the British man-of-war "Drake;" and as a result of this encounter he had prisoners enough to exchange for many hapless Americans languishing in hulks and prisons.

After the wind and tide had defeated the midnight attempt made by Jones to capture the "Drake," that craft had remained quietly at her anchorage, little suspecting that the bay of Carrickfergus had held so dangerous a neighbor. But soon reports of the "Ranger's" depredations began to reach the ears of the British captain. The news of the desperate raid upon Whitehaven became known to him. He therefore determined to leave his snug anchorage, and go in search of the audacious Yankee. Just as the captain of the "Drake" had reached this determination, and while he was making sail, the "Ranger" appeared off the mouth of the harbor.

The "Drake" promptly sent out a boat to examine the strange craft, and report upon her character. Jones saw her coming, and resolved to throw her off the scent. Accordingly, by skilful seamanship, he kept the stern of the "Ranger" continually presented to the prying eyes in the

British boat. Turn which way they might, be as swift in their manœuvres as they might, the British scouts could see nothing of the "Ranger" but her stern, pierced with two cabin windows, as might be the stern of any merchantman. Her sides, dotted with frowning ports, were kept securely hidden from their eyes.

Though provided with spy-glasses, the people in the boat were totally deceived. Unsuspectingly they came up under the stern of the "Ranger," and demanded to come on board. As the officer in command clambered up a rope, and vaulted the taffrail to the quarter-deck, he saw Paul Jones and his lieutenants, in full uniform, standing before him.

"Why, — why, what ship's this ?" stammered the astonished officer.

"This is the American Continental ship 'Ranger,' and you are my prisoner," responded Jones; and at the words a few sailors, with cutlasses and pistols, called to the men in the boat alongside, to come aboard and give themselves up.

From his captives Jones learned that the news of the Whitehaven raid had reached the "Drake" only the night before; and that she had been re-enforcing her crew with volunteers, preparatory to going out in search of the "Ranger." As he stood talking to the captured British naval officer, Jones noticed slender columns of smoke rising from the woods on neighboring highlands, where he knew there were no houses.

"What does that mean ?" he asked.

"Alarm fires, sir," answered the captive; "the news of your descent upon Whitehaven is terrifying the whole country."

Soon, however, the attention of the Americans was diverted from the signal-fires to the "Drake." An appearance of life and bustle was observable about the boat. The shrill notes of the boatswain's whistle, and the tramp of men about the capstan, came faintly over the waters. The rigging was full of sailors, and the sails were being quickly spread to catch the fresh breeze. Soon the ship began to move slowly from her anchorage; she heeled a little to one side, and, responsive to her helm, turned down the bay. She was coming out to look after her lost boat.

Jones determined to hold his ground, and give battle to the Englishman. He at once began to prepare for battle in every way possible without alarming the enemy. The great guns were loaded and primed. Cutlasses and pistols were brought up from the armorer's room, and placed in convenient locations on the main deck, so that the boarders might find them when needed. The powder-monkeys, stripped for action, and the handlers and cartridge-makers entered the powder-magazine, and prepared to hand out the deadly explosive. The cook and his assistant strewed sawdust and ashes about the decks, to catch the blood, and keep the men from slipping. Every one was busy, from the captain down to the galley-boy.

There was plenty of time to prep re; for the tide was out, and the "Drake," beating down a narrow channel, made but slow headway. The delay was a severe strain upon the nerves of the men, who stood silent and grim at their quarters on the American ship, waiting for the fight to begin. At such a moment, even the most courageous must lose heart, as he thinks upon the terrible ordeal through which he must pass. Visions of home and loved ones flit before his misty eyes; and Jack chokes down a sob as he hides his emotion in nervously fingering the lock of his gun, or taking a squint through the port-holes at the approaching enemy.

At length the "Drake" emerged from the narrow channel of the harbor, and coming within hailing distance of the "Ranger," ran up the flag of England, and hailed, —

"What ship is that?"

Paul Jones, himself standing on the taffrail, made answer, —

"This is the American Continental ship 'Ranger.' We are waiting for you. The sun is but little more than an hour from setting. It is therefore time to begin."

The "Drake" lay with her bow towards the "Ranger," and a little astern. As Jones finished speaking, he turned to the man at the wheel, and said, "Put your helm up. Up, I say!"

Quickly responsive to her helm, the vessel swung round; and, as her broadside came to bear, she let fly a full broadside of solid shot into the crowded decks and hull of the "Drake." Through timbers and planks, flesh and bone, the iron hail rushed, leaving death, wounds, and destruction in its path. The volunteers that the "Drake" had added to her crew so crowded the decks, that the execution was fearful. It seemed as though every shot found a human mark.

But the British were not slow to return the fire, and the roar of their broadside was heard before the thunder of the American fire had ceased to reverberate among the hills along the shore.

Then followed a desperate naval duel. The tide of victory flowed now this way, and now that. Jones kept his ship at close quarters with the enemy, and stood on the quarter-deck urging on his gunners, now pointing out some vulnerable spot, now applauding a good shot, at one time cheering, and at another swearing, watching every movement of his foe, and giving quick but wise orders to his helmsman, his whole mind concentrated upon the course of battle, and with never a thought for his own safety.

For more than an hour the battle raged, but the superior gunnery of the Americans soon began to tell. The "Drake" fought under no colors, her ensign having been shot away early in the action. But the spirited manner in which her guns were worked gave assurance that she had not struck. The American fire had wrought great execution on the deck of the Englishman. Her captain was desperately wounded early in the fight; and the first lieutenant, who took his place, was struck down by a musket-ball from the "Ranger's" tops. The cock-pit of the "Drake" was like a butcher's shambles, so bespattered was it with blood. But on the "Ranger" there was little execution. The brave Wallingford, Jones's first lieutenant and right-hand man, was killed early in the action, and one poor fellow accompanied him to his long account; but beyond this there were no deaths. Six men only were wounded.

The sun was just dipping the lower edge of its great red circle beneath the watery horizon, when the "Drake" began to show signs of failing. First her fire slackened. A few guns would go off at a time, followed by a long silence. That portion of her masts which was visible above the clouds of gunpowder-smoke showed plainly the results of American gunnery. The sails were shot to ribbons. The cordage cut by the flying shot hung loosely down, or was blown out by the breeze. The spars were shattered, and hung out of place. The mainmast canted to leeward, and was in imminent danger of falling. The jib had been shot away entirely, and was trailing in the water alongside the ship.

Gradually the fire of the "Drake" slackened, until at last it had ceased altogether. Noticing this, Capt. Jones gave orders to cease firing; and soon silence reigned over the bay that had for an hour resounded with the thunder of cannon. As the smoke that enveloped the two ships cleared away, the people on the "Ranger" could see an officer standing on the rail of the "Drake" waving a white flag. At the sight a mighty huzza went up from the gallant lads on the Yankee ship, which was, however, quickly checked by Jones.

"Have you struck your flag?" he shouted through a speaking-trumpet.

"We have, sir," was the response.

"Then lay by until I send a boat aboard," directed Capt. Jones; and soon after a cutter put off from the side of the "Ranger," and made for the captured ship.

The boarding-officer clambered over the bulwarks of the "Drake," and, veteran naval officer as he was, started in amazement at the scene of bloodshed before him. He had left a ship on which were two dead and six wounded men. He had come to a ship on which were forty men either dead or seriously wounded. Two dismounted cannon lay across the deck, one resting on the shattered and bleeding fragments of a man torn to pieces by a heavy shot. The deck was slippery with blood. The cock-pit was not large enough to hold all the wounded; and many sufferers lay on the deck crying piteously for aid, and surrounded by the mangled bodies of their dead comrades. The body of the captain, who had died of his wound, lay on the deserted quarter-deck.

Hastily the American officer noted the condition of the prize, and returned to his own ship for aid. All the boats of the "Ranger" were then lowered, and in the growing darkness the work of taking possession of the prize began. Most of the prisoners were transferred to the "Ranger." The dead were thrown overboard without burial service or ceremony of any kind, such is the grim earnestness of war. Such of the wounded as could not be taken care of in the sick-bay of the "Drake" were transferred to the "Ranger." The decks were scrubbed, holystoned, and sprinkled with hot vinegar to take away the smell of the blood-soaked planks. Cordage was spliced, sails mended, shot-holes plugged up; and, by the time morning came, the two ships were sufficiently repaired to be ready to leave the bay.

But, before leaving, Capt. Jones set at liberty two fishermen, whom he had captured several days before, and held prisoners lest they should spread the news of his presence in those parts. While the fishermen had been taken on board the "Ranger," and treated with the utmost kindness, their boat had been made fast alongside. Unluckily, however, the stormy weather had torn the boat from its fastenings; and it foundered before the eyes of its luckless owners, who bitterly bewailed their hard fate as they saw their craft disappear. But, when they came to leave the "Ranger," their sorrow was turned to joy; for Jones gave them money enough to buy for them a new boat and outfit, — a bit of liberality very characteristic of the man.

When the "Drake" was in condition to sail, Jones put her in command of Lieut. Simpson, and the two vessels left the bay. This choice of commander proved to be an unfortunate one. Simpson was in many ways a most eccentric officer. He was a violent advocate of equal rights of all men, and even went so far as to disbelieve in the discipline without which no efficiency can be obtained on ship-board. He was an eighteenth-century Sir Joseph Porter. He believed that all questions of importance on ship-board should be settled by a vote of the crew; that the captain was, in a certain sense, only perpetual chairman of a meeting, and should only execute the will of the sailors. Naturally, this view of an officer's authority was little relished by Lieut. Simpson's brother officers, and he had for some time been greatly dissatisfied with his position.

When it came about, therefore, that the "Ranger," seeing a strange sail in the offing, left the "Drake" to go in pursuit of the stranger, Lieut. Simpson saw his chance to make off with the "Drake," and thus rid himself of the disagreeable necessity of submitting to the orders of a superior officer. This course he determined to adopt; and when Jones, having overtaken the stranger and found her a neutral, turned to rejoin his prize, he was vastly astounded at the evolutions of the "Drake." The vessel which he had left in charge of one of his trusted officers seemed to be trying to elude him. She was already hull down on the horizon, and was carrying every stitch of sail. The "Ranger" signalled to her colleague to return, but in vain. Several large ships were in sight; but Jones, perplexed by the strange antics of his consort, abandoned all thoughts of making captures, and made after the rapidly vanishing "Drake."

As the "Ranger" cut through the ugly cross seas of the channel, Jones revolved in his mind the causes which might lead to the inexplicable flight of his consort. His chief fear was that the prisoners on the "Drake" might have risen, overpowered their captors, and were then endeavoring to take the ship into a British port. Convinced that this was the true explanation of the matter, Jones made tremendous efforts to overhaul the prize before the night should give her an opportunity to elude pursuit. Every thing from jib-boom to main-truck, that would draw, was set on the "Ranger;" and the gallant little vessel ploughed along at a rate that almost belied her reputation as a slow craft. After an hour's run, it became evident that the "Ranger" was gaining ground. Nevertheless, darkness settled over the waters, and the "Drake" was still far in the lead. It was not until the next day that the runaway was overhauled. Upon boarding the "Drake," Jones found, to his intense indignation, that not to the revolt of the captives, but to the wilful and silly insubordination of Lieut. Simpson, the flight of the captured vessel was due. This officer, feeling himself aggrieved by something Jones had said or done, had determined to seize upon the "Drake," repair her in some French port, and thenceforward to cruise as a privateer. This plan was nipped in the bud by Jones, who put the disobedient officer in irons, and carried the "Drake" into Brest as a prize.

All Europe now rang with the praises of Paul Jones. Looked at in the calm light of history, his achievements do not appear so very remarkable. But it is none the less true that they have never been paralleled. Before the day of Paul Jones, no hostile vessel had ever swept the English Channel and Irish Sea clear of British merchantmen. And since the day of Paul Jones the exploit has never been repeated, save by the little American brig "Argus" in the War of 1812. But neither before nor since the day of Paul Jones has the spectacle of a British ship in an English port, blazing with fire applied by the torches of an enemy, been seen. And no other man than Paul Jones has, for several centuries, led an invading force down the level highways, and across the green fields, of England.

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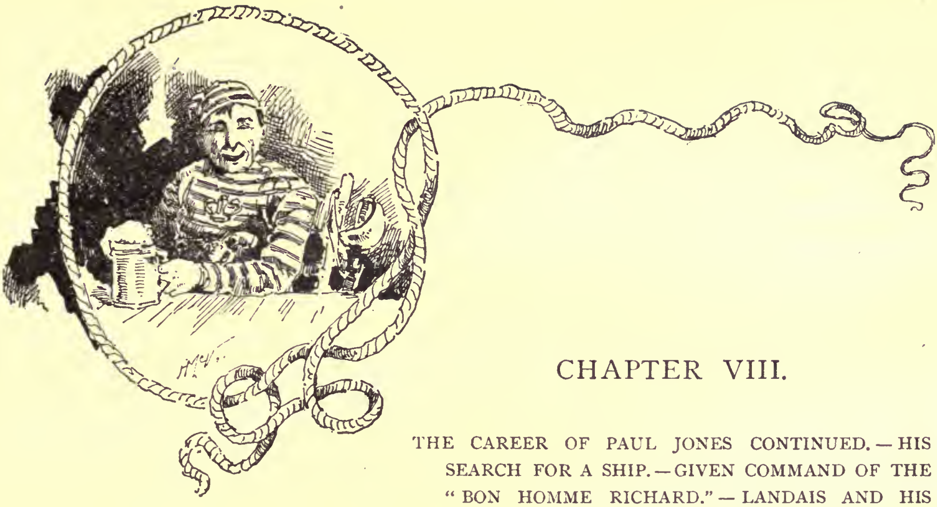


CHAPTER VIII.

THE CAREER OF PAUL JONES CONTINUED. — HIS SEARCH FOR A SHIP. — GIVEN COMMAND OF THE "BON HOMME RICHARD." — LANDAIS AND HIS CHARACTER. — THE FRUSTRATED MUTINY. — LANDAIS QUARRELS WITH JONES. — EDINBURGH AND LEITH THREATENED. — THE DOMINIE'S PRAYER.

WHEN Paul Jones arrived at Brest, bringing the captured Drake, he found the situation of affairs materially altered. France had acknowledged the independence of the American Colonies, and had openly espoused their cause as against that of Great Britain. It was no longer necessary to resort to cunning deceptions to buy a warship or sell a prize in a French port. French vessels, manned by French crews and commanded by French officers, were putting to sea to strike a blow against the British. French troops were being sent to America. The stars and stripes waved by the side of the *fleur de lys;* and Benjamin Franklin, the American envoy, was the lion of French society, and the idol of the Parisian mob.

Paul Jones saw in this friendship of France for the struggling colonies his opportunity. Heretofore he had been condemned to command only slow-going, weak ships. He had been hampered by a lack of funds for the payment of his crew and the purchase of provisions. More than once the inability of the impoverished Continental Congress to provide the sinews of war had forced him to go down into his own purse for the necessary funds. All this period of penury he now felt was past. He could rely upon the king of France for a proper vessel, and the funds with which to prosecute his work on the seas. Accordingly, when the "Ranger" was again ready for sea, he turned her over to the insubordinate Lieut. Simpson, while he himself remained in France with the expectation of being provided with a better ship.

But the sturdy seaman soon found how vexatious is the lot of him who depends upon the bounty of monarchs. Ship after ship was put in commission, but no command was tendered to the distinguished American. The French naval officers had first to be attended to. Jones made earnest appeals to the minister of the marine. He brought every possible influence to bear. His claims were urged by Dr. Franklin, but all to no avail. At last an appointment came. It was to command an English prize, lately captured and brought into Brest. Thither went Jones to examine the craft. Much to his disappointment, he found her very slow; and this determined him to decline the commission.

"I wish to have no connection with any ship that does not sail fast," he wrote to a gentleman who had secured for him the appointment; "for I intend to go in harm's way. You know I believe that this is not every one's intention. Therefore, buy a frigate that sails fast, and that is sufficiently large to carry twenty-six or twenty-eight guns, not less than twelve-pounders, on one deck. I would rather be shot ashore than sent to sea in such things as the armed prizes I have described."

Five months of waiting and ceaseless solicitation of the authorities still left the sailor, who had won so many victories, stranded in shameful inactivity. He had shrunk from a personal interview with the king, trusting rather to the efforts of his friends, many of whom were in high favor at Versailles. But one day he happened to light upon an old copy of "Poor Richard's Almanac," that unique publication in which Benjamin Franklin printed so many wise maxims and witty sayings. As Jones listlessly turned its pages, his eye fell upon the maxim, —

"If you wish to have any business done faithfully and expeditiously, go and do it yourself. Otherwise, send some one."

Shutting the book, and dashing it to the floor, Jones sprang to his feet exclaiming, "I will go to Versailles this very day." Before night he set out, and soon reached the royal court. His reputation easily gained him an interview; and his frank, self-reliant way so impressed the monarch, that in five days the American was tendered the command of the ship "Daras," mounting forty guns.

Great was the exultation of the American seaman at this happy termination of his labor. Full of gratitude to the distinguished philosopher whose advice had proved so effective, he wrote to the minister of marine, begging permission to change the name of the vessel to the "Poor Richard," or, translated into French, the "Bon Homme Richard." Permission was readily granted; and thereafter the "Bon Homme Richard," with Paul Jones on the quarter-deck, did valiant work for the cause of the young American Republic.

The "Bon Homme Richard" was lying in the harbor of l'Orient when Jones visited her to examine his new ship. He found her a fairly well modelled craft, giving promise of being a good sailer. She had one of the high pitched poops that were so common in the early part of the last century, and that gave to the sterns of ships of that period the appearance of lofty towers. Originally she was a single-decked ship, mounting her battery on one gun-deck, with the exception of a few cannon on the quarter-deck and forecastle. The gun-deck mounted twenty-eight guns, all twelve-pounders. On the quarter-deck and forecastle were eight long nines. To this armament Jones at once added six eighteen-pounders, which were mounted in the gun-room below.

To man this vessel, Jones was obliged to recruit a most motley crew. Few American seamen were then in France, and he considered himself fortunate to find enough to fill the stations of officers on the quarter-deck and forward. For his crew proper he was forced to accept an undisciplined crowd of Portuguese, Norwegians, Germans, Spaniards, Swedes, Italians, Malays, Scotch, Irish, and even a few Englishmen. About a hundred and thirty-five marines were put aboard to keep order among this rabble; and, even with this aid to discipline, it is wonderful that no disturbance ever broke out in a crew that was made up of so many discordant elements.

While the "Bon Homme Richard" was being made ready for sea, the vessels that were to sail with her as consorts were making for the rendezvous at l'Orient. These vessels were the "Pallas," "Cerf," "Vengeance," and "Alliance." The three former were small vessels, built in France, and manned wholly by Frenchmen. The "Alliance" was a powerful, well-built American frigate, carrying an American crew, but commanded by a French officer, — Capt. Landais. This vessel was the last to arrive at the rendezvous, as she had a stormy and somewhat eventful trip across the ocean.

The "Alliance" was a thirty-two gun frigate, built under the supervision of the American Marine Committee, and which had come to European waters, bringing as a passenger the distinguished Gen. Lafayette. As has been stated, she was under the command of a French naval officer, to whom the command had been offered as a compliment to France. Unfortunately the jack tars of America were not so anxious to compliment France, and looked with much disfavor upon the prospect of serving under a Frenchman. Capt. Landais, therefore, found great difficulty in getting a crew to man his frigate; and when Lafayette reached Boston, ready to embark for France, the roster of the ship in which he was to sail was still painfully incomplete. Great was the mortification of the American authorities; and the government of Massachusetts, desiring to aid the distinguished Frenchman in every way, offered to complete by impressment. It is vastly to the credit of Lafayette that he refused for a moment to countenance a method of recruiting so entirely in opposition to those principles of liberty to which he was devoted. But, though impressment was not resorted to, a plan hardly less objectionable was adopted. The British man-of-war "Somerset" had been wrecked on the New England coast some time before, and many of her crew were then in Boston. These men volunteered to join the crew of the "Alliance," though by so doing they knew that they were likely to be forced to fight against their own flag and countrymen. But the ties of nationality bear lightly upon sailors, and these men were as ready to fight under the stars and stripes as under the cross of St. George.

With a crew made up of Americans, Englishmen, and Frenchmen, the "Alliance" put to sea in the early part of January, 1779. It was the most stormy season of the year on the tempestuous Atlantic. But the storms which racked the good ship from without were as nothing to the turbulence within. In the forecastle were three different elements of discord. British, French, and Americans quarrelled bitterly among themselves, and the jackies went about their work with a sullen air that betokened trouble brewing.

The officers suspected the impending trouble, but had little idea of its extent. They were living over a volcano which was liable to burst forth at any moment. The Englishmen in the crew, who numbered some seventy or eighty, had determined to mutiny, and had perfected all their plans for the uprising. Their intention was not only to seize the ship, and take her into an English port, but they proposed to wreak their hatred in the bloodiest form upon the officers. Capt. Landais, as the special object of their hate, was to be put into an open boat without food, water, oars, or sails. Heavy irons were to bind his wrists and ankles, and he was to be set adrift to starve on the open ocean. The fate of the surgeon and marine officer was to be equally hard. They were to be hanged and quartered, and their bodies cast into the sea. The sailing-master was to be seized up to the mizzen-mast, stripped to the waist, and his back cut to pieces with the cat-of-nine-tails; after which he was to be slowly hacked to pieces with cutlasses, and thrown into the sea. The gunner, carpenter, and boatswain were to be mercifully treated. No torture was prepared for them, but they were to be promptly put to death. As to the lieutenants, they were to be given the choice between navigating the ship to the nearest British port, or walking the plank.

This sanguinary programme the mutineers discussed day and night. The ringleaders were in the same watch, and in the silent hours of the night matured their plans, and picked out men whom they thought would join them. One by one they cautiously chose their associates. The sailor whom the mutineers thought was a safe man would be led quietly apart from his fellows to some secluded nook on the gun-deck; and there, with many pledges to secrecy, the plot would be revealed, and his assistance asked. Or perhaps of two men out on the end of a tossing yard-arm, far above the raging waters, one would be a mutineer, and would take that opportunity to try to win his fellow sailor to the cause. So the mutiny spread apace; and the volcano was almost ready to burst forth, when all was discovered, and the plans of the mutineers were happily defeated.

The conspirators had succeeded in gaining the support of all the Englishmen in the crew, as well as many of the sailors of other nationalities. So numerous were their adherents, that they were well able to capture the ship; but before so doing they sought to gain one more recruit. This man was an American sailor, who had lived long in Ireland, and spoke with a slight brogue, that led the conspirators to think him a subject of the king, and an enemy to the revolted colonies. This man was known to have some knowledge of navigation, and the mutineers felt that his assistance would be essential to the success of their plot. Though they had planned to force the lieutenant, under penalty of death, to navigate the vessel into a British port, they had no means of telling whether the lieutenant should play them false. It would be an easy matter for an officer to take the ship into a French port, where the lives of the conspirators should pay the penalty of their misdeeds. Accordingly, it was highly important for them to number among them some one versed in the science of navigation; and, with this end in view, they turned to the young Irish-American.

The young seaman proved to be possessed of the loyalty and shrewdness of the Yankee, together with a touch of the blarney of the genuine Irishman. He listened to the complaints of the mutineers, sympathized with their grievances, entered heartily into their plans, and by his apparent interest in the conspiracy soon became looked upon as one of the chief ringleaders.

He learned that the plan of the conspirators was to assemble on deck about daylight on a certain day when one of the conspirators should be posted in the tops as lookout. This man was to raise the cry of "Sail, ho!" when the officers and passengers would of course come to the quarter-deck unarmed. The mutineers would commence operations by seizing them in a body. Then, separating into four parties, the conspirators would seize upon the ship. On the forecastle were mounted four nine-pound guns. These were usually kept charged with blank cartridge only; but a gunner's mate, who was one of the ringleaders, had quietly slipped a charge of canister into each gun. Should the officers show signs of resistance, these cannon were to be trained aft, and the quarter-deck swept by their discharge. Discipline on a man-of-war requires that the crew should be kept disarmed, except in time of battle; the cutlasses, pikes, and pistols being given over to the armorer. But a sergeant of marines had done the cause of the mutineers good service, by purloining some muskets, and handing them over to the ringleaders.

Having thus gained full knowledge of the plans of the mutineers, the loyal seaman sought the first opportunity to warn the officers of the ship. But not until three o'clock on the afternoon before the day set for the mutiny could he manage to slip into the captain's cabin unseen by the conspirators. Landais and Lafayette were seated there talking.

"Well, what's wanted now?" asked the captain in the peremptory tone officers assume in speaking to a sailor.

The intruder stammered and looked confused, but finally managed to tell the story. Landais was amazed. That so dangerous a conspiracy should have been nurtured in his crew, astonished him beyond expression. But he wasted no time in vain conjectures. Quietly the word was passed to the officers and passengers to assemble in the captain's cabin. Some trusty petty officers were given arms to distribute among the American and French seamen who had not been infected with the fever of mutiny. At a given signal the officers and passengers rushed to the quarter-deck. The American and French seamen joined them; and the conspirators suddenly found themselves confronted by an angry body of determined men, fully armed.

The leading mutineers were pointed out by the informer, instantly seized, and hurried below in irons. Then the work of arresting the other conspirators began, and was continued until about forty of the English were in irons. While the work was progressing, a square-rigged ship hove in sight, and was soon made out to be one of the enemy's twenty-gun ships. Under ordinary circumstances, the "Alliance" would have sought to give battle to the enemy; but in the present instance, with mutiny rife among his crew, Capt. Landais thought it his wisest course to avoid the stranger. A few days later, the "Alliance" arrived at Brest, where the mutineers were thrown into jail, and kept in close confinement, until exchanged for American prisoners in the hands of the British.

But to return to Paul Jones, whom we left with the "Bon Homme Richard" lying at anchor in the harbor of l'Orient waiting for the arrival of his allies. On the 19th of June, 1779, all were ready to sail, and left the harbor with a few coasters and transports under convoy. The "Bon Homme Richard" was the largest vessel of the little fleet; next came the "Alliance," under command of Capt. Landais; then the "Pallas," an old merchantman hastily remodelled, and mounting thirty-two guns; then the "Cerf" with eighteen guns, and the "Vengeance" with twelve. Though not a very formidable armada, this little fleet might have done great good to the American cause, had Paul Jones been given proper authority, and had his daring plans been countenanced by the French authorities. But, though nominally commander-in-chief, Jones soon found that he had no means of enforcing his authority. He found that the three Frenchmen in command of the other vessels of the squadron looked upon him as a partner in the enterprise, rather than as a leader with absolute authority. They paid no heed to the signals set at the fore of the flagship. They wilfully disobeyed orders. Worse than all, they proved to be poor seamen; and the squadron had hardly got into blue water before the "Alliance" was run foul of the "Richard," losing her own mizzen-mast, and tearing away the head and bowsprit of the flagship. Thus, after long months of preparation for sea, Jones found himself forced to return to port to refit. It has been charged that this accident was not altogether accidental, so far as the "Alliance" was concerned. Landais, the commander of that vessel, hated Jones, and was insanely jealous of the man who outranked him. The collision was only the first of a series of mishaps, all of which Landais ascribed to accident, but which unprejudiced readers must confess seem to have been inspired by malice or the results of gross incompetence.

A few days sufficed to repair all damage, and again the vessels sought the open sea. When two days out, a strange sail was sighted. Jones crowded all sail on the "Richard," and set out in hot pursuit, but found, to his bitter disappointment, that his ship was a wretchedly slow sailer. Therefore, signalling to the swift-sailing "Cerf" to follow the stranger, he abandoned the chase to the smaller craft. All night long the cutter followed in the wake of the stranger, and when day broke the two vessels were near enough to each other to readily make out each other's character. The stranger proved to be a small English cruiser of fourteen guns. Her captain was no poltroon; for as soon as he discovered that the ship from which he had been trying to escape was but little larger than his own, he came about, and, running down upon the "Cerf," opened fire. The action was a sharp one. The two vessels were fairly matched and well fought. The thunder of their broadsides resounded far and wide over the ocean. For an hour they grappled in deadly strife. The tide of battle turned now to one side, and now to the other. But at last the superior metal of the "Cerf" won for her the victory. With her battered prize in tow, she sought to rejoin the squadron, but unluckily fell in with a British frigate that had been attracted by the sound of the cannonading. It was useless to think of saving the prize: so the "Cerf" abandoned it, and after a hard chase escaped, and put into the harbor of l'Orient.

In the mean time, the squadron had become separated; and, after a fortnight's fruitless cruising, all the vessels returned to l'Orient. Here they lay until the middle of August. More than three months had passed since Jones had been given command of the "Richard." Most of the time had been spent in port. The little cruising that had been done had been unproductive of results. Dissension and jealousy made the squadron absolutely ineffective. As for the "Bon Homme Richard," she had proved a failure; being unable to overhaul the enemy that she wished to engage, or escape from the man-of-war she might wish to avoid. Jones saw his reputation fast slipping away from him. Bitterly he bewailed the fate that had put him at the mercy of a lot of quarrelsome Frenchmen. He determined that when once again he got to sea he would ignore his consorts, and fight the battles of his country with his own ship only.

It was on the 14th of August that the squadron weighed anchor, and left the harbor of l'Orient. The "Richard" was greatly strengthened by the addition to her crew of about one hundred American seamen, who had been sent to France from England in exchange for a number of English prisoners. With her sailed the same vessels that had previously made up the squadron, together with two French privateers,—the "Monsieur" and the "Granville." Four days after sailing, a large French ship in charge of a British prize-crew was sighted. The whole squadron gave chase; and the "Monsieur," being the swiftest sailer of the fleet, recaptured the prize. Then arose a quarrel. The privateersmen claimed that the prize was theirs alone. They had captured it, and the regular naval officers had no authority over them. To this Capt. Jones vigorously demurred, and, taking the prize from its captors, sent it to l'Orient to be disposed of in accordance with the laws. In high dudgeon, the privateers vowed vengeance, and that night the "Monsieur" left the squadron. She was a fine, fast vessel, mounting forty guns; and her departure greatly weakened the fleet.

A few days later a second serious loss was encountered. The fleet was lying off Cape Clear, only a few miles from the shore. The day was perfectly calm. Not a breath of wind ruffled the calm surface of the water. The sails flapped idly against the mast. The sailors lay about the decks, trying to keep cool, and lazily watching the distant shore. Far off in the distance a white sail glimmered on the horizon.

It showed no sign of motion, and was clearly becalmed. After some deliberation, Capt. Jones determined to attempt to capture the stranger by means of boats. The two largest boats, manned with crews of picked men, were sent out to hail the vessel, and, if she proved to be an enemy, to capture her. In this they were successful, and returned next day, bringing the captured craft.

But, while the two boats were still out after the enemy's ship, the tide changed; and Capt. Jones soon saw that his ship was in danger from a powerful current, that seemed to be sweeping her on shore. A few hundred yards from the ship, two dangerous reefs, known as the Skallocks and the Blasketts, reared their black heads above the calm surface of the sea. Toward these rocks the "Bon Homme Richard" was drifting, when Jones, seeing the danger, ordered out two boats to tow the ship to a less perilous position. As the best men of the crew had been sent away to capture the brig, the crews of the two boats were made up of the riff-raff of the crew. Many of them were Englishmen, mere mercenary sailors, who had shipped on the Richard, secretly intending to desert at the first opportunity. Therefore, when night fell, as they were still in the boats trying to pull the "Richard's" head around, they cut the ropes and made off for the shore.

The desertion was discovered immediately. The night was clear, and by the faint light of the stars the course of the receding boats could be traced. The sailing-master of the "Richard," a Mr. Trent, being the first to discover the treachery, sprang into a boat with a few armed men, and set out in hot pursuit. The bow-gun of the "Richard" was hastily trained on the deserters, and a few cannon-shot sent after them; but without effect. Before the pursuing boat could overhaul the fugitives, a dense bank of gray fog settled over the water, and pursued and pursuers were hidden from each other and from the gaze of those on the man-of-war. All night long the fog, like a moist, impenetrable curtain, rested on the ocean. The next day the "Cerf" set out to find the missing boats. As she neared the shore, to avoid raising an alarm, she hoisted British colors. Hardly had she done so when she was seen by Trent and his companions. The fog made the outlines of the cutter indistinct, and magnified her in the eyes of the Americans, so that they mistook her for an English man-of-war. To avoid what they thought would lead to certain capture on the water, they ran their boat ashore, and speedily fell into the hands of the British coast guard. They were at once thrown into prison, where the unfortunate Trent soon died. The rest of the party were exchanged later in the war.

The loss of the boats, and capture of Mr. Trent and his followers, were not the only unfortunate results of this incident; for the "Cerf" became lost in the fog, and before she could rejoin the fleet a violent gale sprang up, and she was carried back to the coast of France. She never again returned to join the fleet, and Jones found his force again depleted.

But the effective force of the squadron under the command of Paul Jones was weakened far more by the eccentric and mutinous actions of Capt. Landais of the "Alliance" than by any losses by desertion or capture. When the news of the loss of two boats by desertion reached the "Alliance," Landais straightway went to the "Richard," and entering the cabin began to upbraid Jones in unmeasured terms for having lost two boats through his folly in sending boats to capture a brig.

"It is not true, Capt. Landais," answered Jones, "that the boats which are lost are the two which were sent to capture the brig."

"Do you tell me I lie?" screamed the Frenchman, white with anger. His officers strove to pacify him, but without avail; and he left the "Richard" vowing that he would challenge Capt. Jones, and kill him. Shortly thereafter the "Richard" captured a very valuable prize, — a ship mounting twenty-two guns, and loaded with sails, rigging, anchors, cables, and other essential articles for the navy Great Britain was building on the Lakes. By desertion and other causes, the crew of the "Richard" was greatly depleted, and not enough men could be spared to man the prize. Jones applied to Landais for aid. In response the Frenchman said, —

"If it is your wish that I should take charge of the prize, I shall not allow any boat or any individual from the 'Bon Homme Richard' to go near her."

To this absurd stipulation Jones agreed. Landais, having thus assumed complete charge of the prize, showed his incompetence by sending her, together with a prize taken by the "Alliance," to Bergen in Norway. The Danish Government, being on friendly terms with England, immediately surrendered the vessels to the British ambassador; and the cause of the young republic was cheated of more than two hundred thousand dollars through the insane negligence of the French captain.

Ever thereafter, Landais manifested the most insolent indifference to the orders of Capt. Jones, to whom, as his superior officer, he should render implicit obedience. He came and went as he saw fit. The "Alliance" would disappear from the squadron, and return again after two or three days' absence, without apology or explanation. Jones soon learned to look with indifference upon the antics of his consort, and considered his squadron as composed of the "Richard," "Vengeance," and "Pallas" only.

On the 15th of September, the three vessels lay off the port of Leith, a thriving city, which was then, as now, the seaport for the greater city of Edinburgh, which stands a little farther inland. Jones had come to this point cherishing one of those daring plans of which his mind was so fertile. He had learned that the harbor was full of shipping, and defended only by a single armed vessel of twenty guns. Shore batteries there were none. The people of the town were resting in fancied security, and had no idea that the dreaded Paul Jones was at their very harbor's mouth. It would have been an easy matter for the three cruisers to make a dash into the harbor, take some distinguished prisoners, demand a huge ransom, fire the shipping, and escape again to the open sea. Had Jones been in reality, as he was in name, the commander of the little fleet, the exploit would have been performed. But the lack of authority which had hampered him throughout his cruise paralyzed him here. By the time he had overcome the timid objections of the captains of the "Vengeance" and the "Pallas," all Leith was aroused. Still Jones persevered. His arrangements were carefully perfected. Troops were to be landed under command of Lieut.-Col. Chamillard, who was to lay before the chief magistrate of the town the following letter, written by Jones himself: —

"I do not wish to distress the poor inhabitants. My intention is only to demand your contribution toward the reimbursement which Britain owes to the much injured citizens of America. Savages would blush at the unmanly violation and rapacity that have marked the tracks of British tyranny in America, from which neither virgin innocence nor helpless age has been a plea of protection or pity.

"Leith and its port now lay at our mercy. And did not the plea of humanity stay the just hand of retaliation, I should without advertisement lay it in ashes. Before I proceed to that stern duty as an officer, my duty as a man induces me to propose to you, by means of a reasonable ransom, to prevent such a scene of horror and distress. For this reason, I have authorized Lieut.-Col. de Chamillard to agree with you on the terms of ransom, allowing you exactly half an hour's reflection before you finally accept or reject the terms which he shall propose."

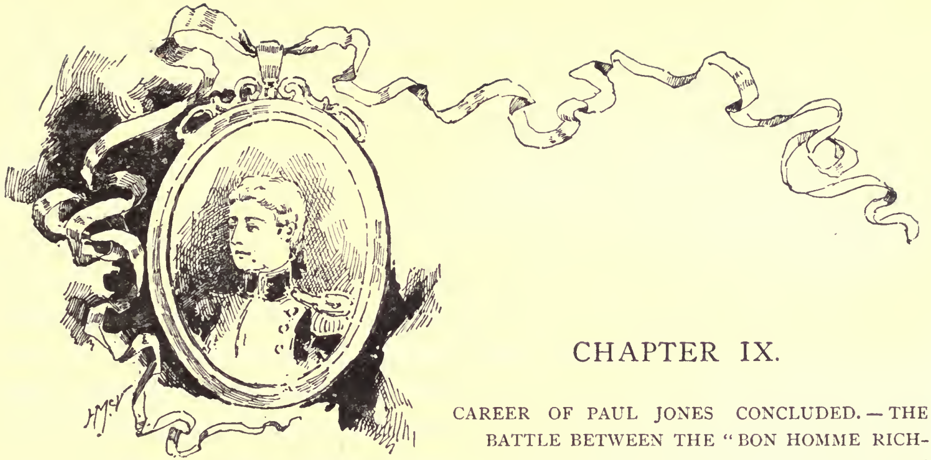
The landing parties having been chosen, the order of attack mapped out, and part to be taken by each boat's-crew accurately defined, the three vessels advanced to the attack. It was a bright Sunday morning. A light breeze blowing on shore wafted the three vessels gently along the smooth surface of the bay. It is said that as the invaders passed the little town of Kirkaldy, the people were at church, but, seeing the three men-of-war passing, deserted the sacred edifice for the beach, where the gray-haired pastor, surrounded by his flock, offered the following remarkable appeal to the Deity: —

"Now, dear Lord, dinna ye think it a shame for ye to send this vile pirate to rob our folk o' Kirkaldy? Ye ken that they are puir enow already, and hae naething to spare. The way the wind blaws, he'll be here in a jiffy. And wha kens what he may do? He's nae too good for ony thing. Mickles the mischief he has done already. He'll burn their hooses, take their very claes, and strip them to the very sark. And waes me, wha kens but that the bluidy villain might tak' their lives! The puir weemin are most frightened out of their wits, and the bairns screeching after them. I canna think of it! I canna think of it!

"I hae long been a faithful servant to ye, O Lord. But gin ye dinna turn the wind about, and blaw the scoundrel out of our gate, I'll nae stir a foot, but will just sit here till the tide comes. Sae tak' your will o't."

Never was prayer more promptly answered. Hardly had the pastor concluded his prayer, when the wind veered round, and soon a violent gale was blowing off shore. In the teeth of the wind, the ships could make no headway. The gale increased in violence until it rivalled in fierceness a tornado. The sea was lashed into fury, and great waves arose, on the crests of which the men-of-war were tossed about like fragile shells. The coal-ship which had been captured was so racked and torn by the heavy seas, that her seams opened, and she foundered so speedily, that only by the most active efforts was her crew saved.

After several hours' ineffectual battling with the gale, the ships were forced to come about and run out to sea; and Jones suffered the mortification of witnessing the failure of his enterprise, after having been within gunshot of the town that he had hoped to capture. As for the good people of Kirkaldy, they were convinced that their escape from the daring seamen was wholly due to the personal influence of their pastor with the Deity; and the worthy parson lived long afterward, ever held in the most mighty veneration by the people of his flock.



CHAPTER IX.

CAREER OF PAUL JONES CONCLUDED. — THE BATTLE BETWEEN THE "BON HOMME RICHARD" AND THE "SERAPIS." — TREACHERY OF LANDAIS. — JONES'S GREAT VICTORY. — LANDAIS STEALS THE "ALLIANCE." — JONES IN COMMAND OF THE "ARIEL." — THE "ARIEL" IN THE STORM. — ARRIVAL IN AMERICA.

AFTER this adventure, the three vessels continued their cruise along the eastern coast of Scotland. Continued good fortune, in the way of prizes, rather soothed the somewhat chafed feelings of Capt. Jones, and he soon recovered from the severe disappointment caused by the failure of his attack upon Leith. He found good reason to believe that the report of his exploits had spread far and wide in England, and that British sea-captains were using every precaution to avoid encountering him. British vessels manifested an extreme disinclination to come within hailing distance of any of the cruisers, although all three were so disguised that it seemed impossible to make out their warlike character. One fleet of merchantmen that caught sight of the "Bon Homme Richard" and the "Pallas" ran into the River Humber, to the mouth of which they were pursued by the two men-of-war. Lying at anchor outside the bar, Jones made signal for a pilot, keeping the British flag flying at his peak. Two pilot-boats came out; and Jones, assuming the character of a British naval officer, learned from them, that, besides the merchantmen lying at anchor in the river, a British frigate lay there waiting to convoy a fleet of merchantmen to the north. Jones tried to lure the frigate out with a signal that the pilots revealed to him; but, though she weighed anchor, she was driven back by strong head-winds that were blowing. Disappointed in this plan, Jones continued his cruise. Soon after he fell in with the "Alliance" and the "Vengeance;" and, while off Flamborough Head, the little squadron encountered a fleet of forty-one merchant ships, that, at the sight of the dreaded Yankee cruisers, crowded together like a flock of frightened pigeons, and made all sail for the shore; while two stately men-of-war — the "Serapis, forty-four," and the "Countess of Scarborough, twenty-two" — moved forward to give battle to the Americans.

Jones now stood upon the threshold of his greatest victory. His bold and chivalric mind had longed for battle, and recoiled from the less glorious pursuit of burning helpless merchantmen, and terrorizing small towns and villages. He now saw before him a chance to meet the enemy in a fair fight, muzzle to muzzle, and with no overpowering odds on either side. Although the Americans had six vessels to the Englishmen's two, the odds were in no wise in their favor. Two of the vessels were pilot-boats, which, of course, kept out of the battle. The "Vengeance," though ordered to render the larger vessels any possible assistance, kept out of the fight altogether, and even neglected to make any attempt to overhaul the flying band of merchantmen. As for the "Alliance," under the erratic Landais, she only entered the conflict at the last moment; and then her broadsides, instead of being delivered into the enemy, crashed through the already shattered sides of the "Bon Homme Richard." Thus the actual combatants were the "Richard" with forty guns, against the "Serapis" with forty-four; and the "Pallas" with twenty-two guns, against the "Countess of Scarborough" with twenty-two.

It was about seven o'clock in the evening of a clear September day — the twenty-third — that the hostile vessels bore down upon each other, making rapid preparations for the impending battle. The sea was fast turning gray, as the deepening twilight robbed the sky of its azure hue. A brisk breeze was blowing, that filled out the bellying sails of the ships, and beat the waters into little waves capped with snowy foam. In the west the rosy tints of the autumnal sunset were still warm in the sky. Nature was in one of her most smiling moods, as these men with set faces, and hearts throbbing with the mingled emotions of fear and excitement, stood silent at their guns, or worked busily at the ropes of the great war-ships.

As soon as he became convinced of the character of the two English ships, Jones beat his crew to quarters, and signalled his consorts to form in line of battle. The people on the "Richard" went cheerfully to their guns; and though the ship was extremely short-handed, and crowded with prisoners, no voice was raised against giving immediate battle to the enemy. The actions of the other vessels of the American fleet, however, gave little promise of any aid from that quarter. When the enemy was first sighted, the swift-sailing "Alliance" dashed forward to reconnoitre. As she passed the "Pallas," Landais cried out, that, if the stranger proved to be a forty-four, the only course for the Americans was immediate flight. Evidently the result of his investigations convinced him that in flight lay his only hope of safety; for he quickly hauled off, and stood away from the enemy. The "Vengeance," too, ran off to windward, leaving the "Richard" and the "Pallas" to bear the brunt of battle.

It was by this time quite dark, and the position of the ships was outlined by the rows of open portholes gleaming with the lurid light of the battle-lanterns. On each ship rested a stillness like that of death itself. The men stood at their guns silent and thoughtful. Sweet memories of home and loved ones mingled with fearful anticipations of death or of mangling wounds in the minds of each. The little lads whose duty in time of action it was to carry cartridges from the magazine to the gunners had ceased their boyish chatter, and stood nervously at their stations. Officers walked up and down the decks, speaking words of encouragement to the men, glancing sharply at primers and breechings to see that all was ready, and ever and anon stooping to peer through the porthole at the line of slowly moving lights that told of the approach of the enemy. On the quarter-deck, Paul Jones, with his officers about him, stood carefully watching the movements of the enemy through a night glass, giving occasionally a quiet order to the man at the wheel, and now and then sending an agile midshipman below with orders to the armorer, or aloft with orders for the sharp-shooters posted in the tops.

As the night came on, the wind died away to a gentle breeze, that hardly ruffled the surface of the water, and urged the ships toward each other but sluggishly. As they came within pistol-shot of each other, bow to bow, and going on opposite tacks, a hoarse cry came from the deck of the "Serapis," —

"What ship is that?"

"What is that you say?"

"What ship is that? Answer immediately, or I shall fire into you."

Instantly with a flash and roar both vessels opened fire. The thunder of the broadsides reverberated over the waters; and the bright flash of the cannon, together with the pale light of the moon just rising, showed Flamborough Head crowded with multitudes who had come out to witness the grand yet awful spectacle of a naval duel.

The very first broadside seemed enough to wreck the fortunes of the "Richard." In her gun-room were mounted six long eighteens, the only guns she carried that were of sufficient weight to be matched against the heavy ordnance of the "Serapis." At the very first discharge, two of these guns burst with frightful violence. Huge masses of iron were hurled in every direction, cutting through beams and stanchions, crashing through floors and bulkheads, and tearing through the agonized bodies of the men who served the guns. Hardly a man who was stationed in the gun-room escaped unhurt in the storm of iron and splinters. Several huge blocks of iron crashed through the upper deck, injuring the people on the deck above, and causing the cry to be raised, that the magazine had blown up. This unhappy calamity not only rendered useless the whole battery of eighteen-pounders, thus forcing Jones to fight an eighteen-pounder frigate with a twelve-pounder battery, but it spread a panic among the men, who saw the dangers of explosion added to the peril they were in by reason of the enemy's continued fire.

Jones himself left the quarter-deck, and rushed forward among the men, cheering them on, and arousing them to renewed activity by his exertions. Now he would lend a hand at training some gun, now pull at a rope, or help a lagging powder-monkey on his way. His pluck and enthusiasm infused new life into the men; and they threw the heavy guns about like playthings, and cheered loudly as each shot told.

The two ships were at no time separated by a greater distance than half a pistol-shot, and were continually manœuvring to cross each others' bows, and get in a raking broadside. In this attempt, they crossed from one to the other side of each other; so that now the port and now the starboard battery would be engaged. From the shore these evolutions were concealed under a dense cloud of smoke, and the spectators could only see the tops of the two vessels moving slowly about before the light breeze; while the lurid flashes of the cannon, and constant thunder of the broadsides, told of the deadly work going on. At a little distance were the "Countess of Scarborough" and the "Pallas," linked in deadly combat, and adding the roar of their cannon to the general turmoil. It seemed to the watchers on the heights that war was coming very close to England.

The "Serapis" first succeeded in getting a raking position; and, as she slowly crossed her antagonist's bow, her guns were fired, loaded again, and again discharged, — the heavy bolts crashing into the "Richard's" bow, and ranging aft, tearing the flesh of the brave fellows on the decks, and cutting through timbers and cordage in their frightful course. At this moment, the Americans almost despaired of the termination of the conflict. The "Richard" proved to be old and rotten, and the enemy's shot seemed to tear her timbers to pieces; while the "Serapis" was new, with timbers that withstood the shock of the balls like steel armor. Jones saw that in a battle with great guns he was sure to be the loser. He therefore resolved to board.

Soon the "Richard" made an attempt to cross the bows of the "Serapis," but not having way enough failed; and the "Serapis" ran foul of her, with her long bowsprit projecting over the stern of the American ship. Springing from the quarter-deck, Jones with his own hands swung grappling-irons into the rigging of the enemy, and made the ships fast. As he bent to his work, he was a prominent target for every sharp-shooter on the British vessel, and the bullets hummed thick about his ears; but he never flinched. His work done, he clambered back to the quarter-deck, and set about gathering the boarders. The two vessels swung alongside each other. The cannonading was redoubled, and the heavy ordnance of the "Serapis" told fearfully upon the "Richard." The American gunners were driven from their guns by the flying cloud of shot and splinters. Each party thought the other was about to board. The darkness and the smoke made all vision impossible; and the boarders on each vessel were crouched behind the bulwarks, ready to give a hot reception to their enemies. This suspense caused a temporary lull in the firing, and Capt. Pearson of the "Serapis" shouted out through the sulphurous blackness, —

"Have you struck your colors?"

"I have not yet begun to fight," replied Jones; and again the thunder of the cannon awakened the echoes on the distant shore. As the firing recommenced, the two ships broke away and drifted apart. Again the "Serapis" sought to get a raking position; but by this time Jones had determined that his only hope lay in boarding. Terrible had been the execution on his ship. The cockpit was filled with the wounded. The mangled remains of the dead lay thick about the decks. The timbers of the ship were greatly shattered, and her cordage was so badly cut that skilful manœuvring was impossible. Many shot-holes were beneath the water-line, and the hold was rapidly filling. Therefore, Jones determined to run down his enemy, and get out his boarders, at any cost.

Soon the two vessels were foul again. Capt. Pearson, knowing that his advantage lay in long-distance fighting, strove to break away. Jones bent all his energies to the task of keeping the ships together. Meantime the battle raged fiercely. Jones himself, in his official report of the battle, thus describes the course of the fight: —

"I directed the fire of one of the three cannon against the main-mast with double-headed shot, while the other two were exceedingly well served with grape and canister shot, to silence the enemy's musketry, and clear her decks, which was at last effected. The enemy were, as I have since understood, on the instant for calling for quarter, when the cowardice or treachery of three of my under officers induced them to call to the enemy. The English commodore asked me if I demanded quarter; and I having answered him in the negative, they renewed the battle with double fury. They were unable to stand the deck; but the fury of their cannon, especially the lower battery, which was entirely formed of eighteen-pounders, was incessant. Both ships were set on fire in various places, and the scene was dreadful beyond the reach of language. To account for the timidity of my three under officers (I mean the gunner, the carpenter, and the master-at-arms), I must observe that the two first were slightly wounded; and as the ship had received various shots under water, and one of the pumps being shot away, the carpenter expressed his fear that she would sink, and the other two concluded that she was sinking, which occasioned the gunner to run aft on the poop, without my knowledge, to strike the colors. Fortunately for me a cannon-ball had done that before by carrying away the ensign staff: he was, therefore, reduced to the necessity of sinking — as he supposed — or of calling for quarter; and he preferred the latter."

Indeed, the petty officers were little to be blamed for considering the condition of the "Richard" hopeless. The great guns of the "Serapis," with their muzzles not twenty feet away, were hurling solid shot and grape through the flimsy shell of the American ship. So close together did the two ships come at times, that the rammers were sometimes thrust into the portholes of the opposite ship in loading. When the ships first swung together, the lower ports of the "Serapis" were closed to prevent the Americans boarding through them. But in the heat of the conflict the ports were quickly blown off, and the iron throats of the great guns again protruded, and dealt out their messages of death. How frightful was the scene! In the two great ships were more than seven hundred men, their eyes lighted with the fire of hatred, their faces blackened with powder or made ghastly by streaks of blood. Cries of pain, yells of rage, prayers, and curses rose shrill above the thunderous monotone of the cannonade. Both ships were on fire; and the black smoke of the conflagration, mingled with the gray gunpowder smoke, and lighted up by the red flashes of the cannonade, added to the terrible picturesqueness of the scene.

The "Richard" seemed like a spectre ship, so shattered was her frame-work. From the main-mast to the stern post, her timbers above the water-line were shot away, a few blackened posts alone preventing the upper deck from falling. Through this ruined shell swept the shot of the "Serapis," finding little to impede their flight save human flesh and bone. Great streams of water were pouring into the hold. The pitiful cries of nearly two hundred prisoners aroused the compassion of an officer, who ran below and liberated them. Driven from the hold by the in-pouring water, these unhappy men ran to the deck, only to be swept down by the storm of cannon-shot and bullets. Fire, too, encompassed them; and the flames were so fast sweeping down upon the magazine, that Capt. Jones ordered the powder-kegs to be brought up and thrown into the sea. At this work, and at the pumps, the prisoners were kept employed until the end of the action.

But though the heavy guns of the "Serapis" had it all their own way below, shattering the hull of the "Richard," and driving the

Yankee gunners from their quarters, the conflict, viewed from the tops, was not so one-sided. The Americans crowded on the forecastle and in the tops, where they continued the battle with musketry and hand-grenades, with such murderous effect that the British were driven entirely from the upper deck. Once a party of about one hundred picked men, mustered below by Capt. Pearson, rushed to the upper deck of the "Serapis," and thence made a descent upon the deck of the "Richard," firing pistols, brandishing cutlasses, and yelling like demons. But the Yankee tars were ready for them at that game, and gave the boarders so spirited a reception with pikes and cutlasses, that they were ready enough to swarm over the bulwarks, and seek again the comparative safety of their own ship.

But all this time, though the Americans were making a brave and desperate defence, the tide of battle was surely going against them Though they held the deck of the "Richard" secure against all comers. yet the Englishmen were cutting the ship away from beneath them, with continued heavy broadsides. Suddenly the course of battle was changed, and victory took her stand with the Americans, all through the daring and coolness of one man, — no officer, but an humble jacky.

The rapid and accurate fire of the sharp-shooters on the "Richard" had driven all the riflemen of the "Serapis" from their posts in the tops. Seeing this, the Americans swarmed into the rigging of their own ship, and from that elevated station poured down a destructive fire of hand-grenades upon the decks of the enemy. The sailors on the deck of the "Richard" seconded this attack, by throwing the same missiles through the open ports of the enemy.

At last one American topman, filling a bucket with grenades, and hanging it on his left arm, clambered out on the yard-arm of the "Richard," that stretched far out over the deck of the British ship. Cautiously the brave fellow crept out on the slender spar. His comrades below watched his progress, while the sharp-shooters kept a wary eye on the enemy, lest some watchful rifleman should pick off the adventurous blue-jacket. Little by little the nimble sailor crept out on the yard, until he was over the crowded gun-deck of the "Serapis." Then, lying at full length on the spar, and somewhat protected by it, he began to shower his missiles upon the enemy's gun-deck. Great was the execution done by each grenade; but at last, one better aimed than the rest fell through the main hatch to the main deck. There was a flash, then a succession of quick explosions; a great sheet of flame gushed up through the hatchway, and a chorus of cries told of some frightful tragedy enacted below.

It seemed that the powder-boys of the "Serapis" had been too active in bringing powder to the guns, and, instead of bringing cartridges as needed, had kept one charge in advance of the demand; so that behind every gun stood a cartridge, making a line of cartridges on the deck from bow to stern. Several cartridges had been broken, so that much loose powder lay upon the deck. This was fired by the discharge of the hand-grenade, and communicated the fire to the cartridges, which exploded in rapid succession, horribly burning scores of men. More than twenty men were killed instantly; and so great was the flame and the force of the explosion, that many of them were left with nothing on but the collars and wristbands of their shirts, and the waistbands of their trousers. It is impossible to conceive of the horror of the sight.

Capt. Pearson in his official report of the battle, speaking of this occurrence, says, "A hand-grenade being thrown in at one of the lower ports, a cartridge of powder was set on fire, the flames of which, running from cartridge to cartridge all the way aft, blew up the whole of the people and officers that were quartered abaft the main-mast; from which unfortunate circumstance those guns were rendered useless for the remainder of the action, and I fear that the greater part of the people will lose their lives."

This event changed the current of the battle. The English were hemmed between decks by the fire of the American topmen, and they found that not even then were they protected from the fiery hail of hand-grenades. The continual pounding of double-headed shot from a gun which Jones had trained upon the main-mast of the enemy had finally cut away that spar; and it fell with a crash upon the deck, bringing down spars and rigging with it. Flames were rising from the tarred cordage, and spreading to the framework of the ship. The Americans saw victory within their grasp.

But at this moment a new and most unsuspected enemy appeared upon the scene. The "Alliance," which had stood aloof during the heat of the conflict, now appeared, and, after firing a few shots into the "Serapis," ranged slowly down along the "Richard," pouring a murderous fire of grape-shot into the already shattered ship. Jones thus tells the story of this treacherous and wanton assault: —

"I now thought that the battle was at an end. But, to my utter astonishment, he discharged a broadside full into the stern of the 'Bon Homme Richard.' We called to him for God's sake to forbear. Yet he passed along the off-side of the ship, and continued firing. There was no possibility of his mistaking the enemy's ship for the 'Bon Homme Richard,' there being the most essential difference in their appearance and construction. Besides, it was then full moonlight; and the sides of the 'Bon Homme Richard' were all black, and the sides of the enemy's ship were yellow. Yet, for the greater security, I showed the signal for our reconnoissance, by putting out three lanterns, — one at the bow, one at the stern, and one at the middle, in a horizontal line.

"Every one cried that he was firing into the wrong ship, but nothing availed. He passed around, firing into the 'Bon Homme Richard,' head, stern, and broadside, and by one of his volleys killed several of my best men, and mortally wounded a good officer of the forecastle. My situation was truly deplorable. The 'Bon Homme Richard' received several shots under the water from the 'Alliance.' The leak gained on the pumps, and the fire increased much on board both ships. Some officers entreated me to strike, of whose courage and sense I entertain a high opinion. I would not, however, give up the point."

Fortunately Landais did not persist in his cowardly attack upon his friends in the almost sinking ship, but sailed off, and allowed the "Richard" to continue her life-and-death struggle with her enemy. The struggle was not now of long duration; for Capt. Pearson, seeing that his ship was a perfect wreck, and that the fire was gaining head way, hauled down his colors with his own hands, since none of his men could be persuaded to brave the fire from the tops of the "Richard."

As the proud emblem of Great Britain fluttered down, Lieut. Richard Dale turned to Capt. Jones, and asked permission to board the prize. Receiving an affirmative answer, he jumped on the gunwale, seized the mainbrace-pendant, and swung himself upon the quarter-deck of the captured ship. Midshipman Mayrant, with a large party of sailors, followed.

So great was the confusion on the "Serapis," that few of the Englishmen knew that the ship had been surrendered. As Mayrant came aboard, he was mistaken for the leader of a boarding-party, and run through the thigh with a pike.

Capt. Pearson was found standing alone upon the quarter-deck, contemplating with a sad face the shattered condition of his once noble ship, and the dead bodies of his brave fellows lying about the decks. Stepping up to him, Lieut. Dale said, —

"Sir, I have orders to send you on board the ship alongside."

At this moment, the first lieutenant of the "Serapis" came up hastily, and inquired, —

"Has the enemy struck her flag?"

"No, sir," answered Dale. "On the contrary, you have struck to us."

Turning quickly to his commander, the English lieutenant asked, —

"Have you struck, sir?"

"Yes, I have," was the brief reply.

"I have nothing more to say," remarked the officer, and turning about was in the act of going below, when Lieut. Dale stopped him, saying, —

"It is my duty to request you, sir, to accompany Capt. Pearson on board the ship alongside."

"If you will first permit me to go below," responded the other, "I will silence the firing of the lower deck guns."

"This cannot be permitted," was the response; and, silently bowing his head, the lieutenant followed his chief to the victorious ship, while two midshipmen went below to stop the firing.

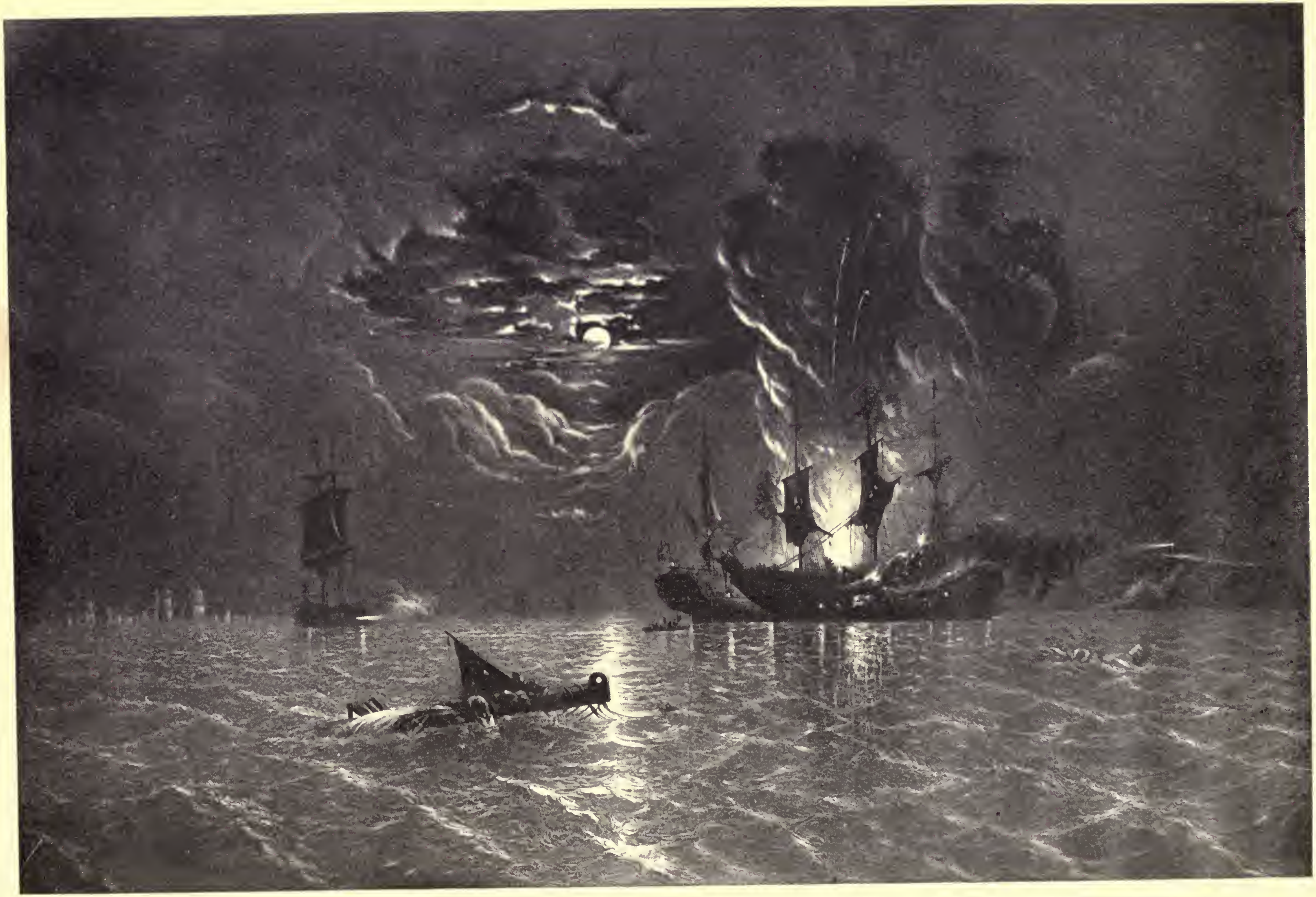
Lieut. Dale remained in command of the "Serapis." Seating himself on the binnacle, he ordered the lashings which had bound the two ships throughout the bloody conflict to be cut. Then the head-sails were braced back, and the wheel put down. But, as the ship had been anchored at the beginning of the battle, she refused to answer either helm or canvas. Vastly astounded at this, Dale leaped from the binnacle; but his legs refused to support him, and he fell heavily to the deck. His followers sprang to his aid; and it was found that the lieutenant had been severely wounded in the leg by a splinter, but had fought out the battle without ever noticing his hurt.

So ended this memorable battle. But the feelings of pride and exultation so natural to a victor died away in the breast of the American captain as he looked about the scene of wreck and carnage. On all sides lay the mutilated bodies of the gallant fellows who had so bravely stood to their guns amid the storm of death-dealing missiles. There they lay, piled one on top of the other, — some with their agonized writhings caught and fixed by death; others calm and peaceful, as though sleeping. Powder-boys, young and tender, lay by the side of grizzled old seamen. Words cannot picture the scene. In his journal Capt. Jones wrote: —

"A person must have been an eye-witness to form a just idea of the tremendous scene of carnage, wreck, and ruin that everywhere appeared. Humanity cannot but recoil from the prospect of such finished horror, and lament that war should produce such fatal consequences."

But worse than the appearance of the main deck was the scene in the cockpit and along the gun-deck, which had been converted into a temporary hospital. Here lay the wounded, ranged in rows along the deck. Moans and shrieks of agony were heard on every side. The surgeons were busy with their glittering instruments. The tramp of men on the decks overhead, and the creaking of the timbers of the water-logged ship, added to the cries of the wounded, made a perfect bedlam of the place.

It did not take long to discover that the "Bon Homme Richard" was a complete wreck, and in a sinking condition. The gallant old craft had kept afloat while the battle was being fought; but now, that the victory had remained with her, she had given up the struggle against the steadily encroaching waves. The carpenters who had explored the hold came on deck with long faces, and reported that nothing could be done to stop the great holes made by the shot of the "Serapis." Therefore Jones determined to remove his crew and all the wounded to the "Serapis," and abandon the noble "Richard" to her fate. Accordingly, all available hands were put at the pumps, and the work of transferring the wounded was begun. Slings were rigged over the side; and the poor shattered bodies were gently lowered into the boats awaiting them, and, on reaching the "Serapis," were placed tenderly in cots ranged along the main deck. All night the work went on;



THE ACTION BETWEEN THE "BON HOMME RICHARD" AND THE "SERAPIS," SEPTEMBER 23, 1779

and by ten o'clock the next morning there were left on the "Richard" only a few sailors, who alternately worked at the pumps, and fought the steadily encroaching flames.

For Jones did not intend to desert the good old ship without a struggle to save her, even though both fire and water were warring against her. Not until the morning dawned did the Americans fully appreciate how shattered was the hulk that stood between them and a watery grave. Fenimore Cooper, the pioneer historian of the United States navy, writes :—

"When the day dawned, an examination was made into the situation of the 'Richard.' Abaft on a line with those guns of the 'Serapis' that had not been disabled by the explosion, the timbers were found to be nearly all beaten in, or beaten out,—for in this respect there was little difference between the two sides of the ship,—and it was said that her poop and upper decks would have fallen into the gun-room, but for a few buttocks that had been missed. Indeed, so large was the vacuum, that most of the shot fired from this part of the 'Serapis,' at the close of the action, must have gone through the 'Richard' without touching any thing. The rudder was cut from the stern post, and the transoms were nearly driven out of her. All the after-part of the ship, in particular, that was below the quarter-deck was torn to pieces; and nothing had saved those stationed on the quarter-deck but the impossibility of sufficiently elevating guns that almost touched their object."

Despite the terribly shattered condition of the ship, her crew worked manfully to save her. But, after fighting the flames and working the pumps all day, they were reluctantly forced to abandon the good ship to her fate. It was nine o'clock at night, that the hopelessness of the task became evident. The "Richard" rolled heavily from side to side. The sea was up to her lower port-holes. At each roll the water gushed through her port-holes, and swashed through the hatchways. At ten o'clock, with a last dying surge, the shattered hulk plunged to her final resting-place, carrying with her the bodies of her dead. They had died the noblest of all deaths,—the death of a patriot killed in doing battle for his country. They receive the grandest of all burials,—the burial of a sailor who follows his ship to her grave, on the hard, white sand, in the calm depths of the ocean.

How many were there that went down with the ship? History does not accurately state. Capt. Jones himself was never able to tell how great was the number of dead upon his ship. The most careful estimate puts the number at forty-two. Of the wounded on the American ship, there were about forty. All these were happily removed from the "Richard" before she sunk.

On the "Serapis" the loss was much greater; but here, too, history is at fault, in that no official returns of the killed and wounded have been preserved. Capt. Jones's estimate, which is probably nearly correct, put the loss of the English ship at about a hundred killed, and an equal number wounded.

The sinking of the "Richard" left the "Serapis" crowded with wounded of both nations, prisoners, and the remnant of the crew of the sunken ship. No time was lost in getting the ship in navigable shape, and in clearing away the traces of the battle. The bodies of the dead were thrown overboard. The decks were scrubbed and sprinkled with hot vinegar. The sound of the hammer and the saw was heard on every hand, as the carpenters stopped the leaks, patched the deck, and rigged new spars in place of those shattered by the "Richard's" fire. All three of the masts had gone by the board. Jury masts were rigged; and with small sails stretched on these the ship beat about the ocean, the plaything of the winds. Her consorts had left her. Landais, seeing no chance to rob Jones of the honor of the victory, had taken the "Alliance" to other waters. The "Pallas" had been victorious in her contest with the "Countess of Scarborough;" and, as soon as the issue of the conflict between the "Bon Homme Richard" and the "Serapis" had become evident, she made off with her prize, intent upon gaining a friendly port. The "Richard," after ten days of drifting, finally ran into Texel, in the north of Holland.

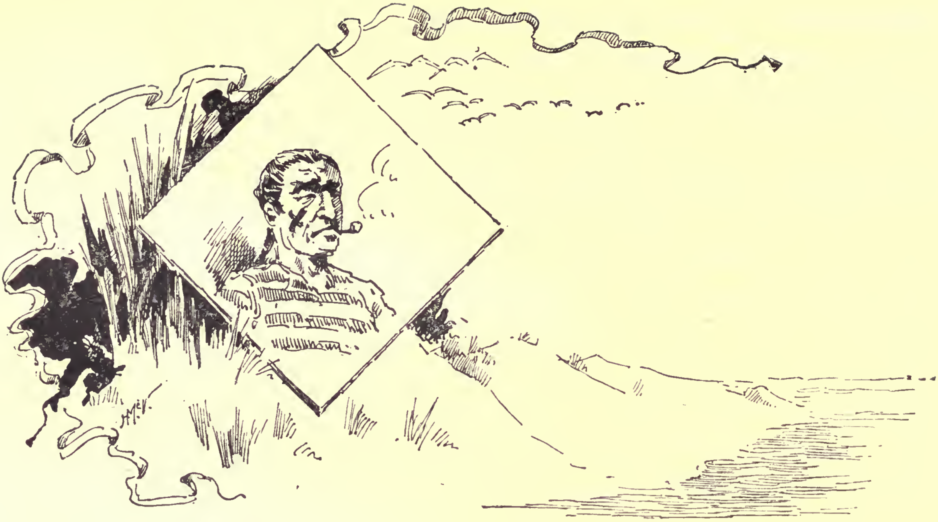
The next year was one of comparative inactivity for Jones. He enjoyed for a time the praise of all friends of the revolting colonies. He was the lion of Paris. Then came the investigation into the action of Landais at the time of the great battle. Though his course at that time was one of open treachery, inspired by his wish to have Jones strike to the "Serapis," that he might have the honor of capturing both ships, Landais escaped any punishment at the hands of his French compatriots. But he was relieved of the command of the "Alliance," which was given to Jones. Highly incensed at this action, the erratic Frenchman incited the crew of the "Alliance" to open mutiny, and, taking command of the ship himself, left France and sailed for America, leaving Commodore Jones in the lurch. On his arrival at Philadelphia, Landais strove to justify his action by blackening the character of Jones, but failed in this, and was dismissed the service. His actions should be regarded with some charity, for the man was doubtless of unsound mind. His insanity became even more evident after his dismissal from the navy; and from that time, until the time of his death, his eccentricities made him generally regarded as one mentally unsound.

Jones, having lost the "Alliance" by the mutiny of Landais, remained abroad, waiting for another ship. He travelled widely on the Continent, and was lavishly entertained by the rich and noble of every nation. Not until October, 1780, did he again tread the deck of a vessel under his own command.

The ship which the French Government finally fitted out and put in command of Paul Jones was the "Ariel," a small twenty-gun ship. This vessel the adventurous sailor packed full of powder and cannon-balls, taking only provisions enough for nine weeks, and evidently expecting to live off the prizes he calculated upon taking. He sailed from l'Orient on a bright October afternoon, under clear skies, and with a fair wind, intending to proceed directly to the coast of America. But the first night out there arose a furious gale. The wind howled through the rigging, tore the sails from the ring-bolts, snapped the spars, and seriously wrecked the cordage of the vessel. The great waves, lashed into fury by the hurricane, smote against the sides of the little craft as though they would burst through her sheathing. The ship rolled heavily; and the yards, in their grand sweep from side to side, often plunged deep into the foaming waves. At last so great became the strain upon the vessel, that the crew were set to work with axes to cut away the foremast. Balancing themselves upon the tossing, slippery deck, holding fast to a rope with one hand, while with the other they swung the axe, the gallant fellows finally cut so deep into the heart of the stout spar, that a heavy roll of the ship made it snap off short, and it fell alongside, where it hung by the cordage. The wreck was soon cleared away; and as this seemed to ease the ship somewhat, and as she was drifting about near the dreaded rock of Penmarque, the anchors were got out. But in the mean time the violent rolling of the "Ariel" had thrown the heel of the main-mast from the step; and the heavy mast was reeling about, threatening either to plough its way upward through the gun-deck, or to crash through the bottom of the ship. It was determined to cut away this mast; but, before this could be done, it fell, carrying with it the mizzen-mast, and crushing in the deck on which it fell. Thus dismasted, the "Ariel" rode out the gale. All night and all the next day she was tossed about on the angry waters. Her crew thought that their last hour had surely come. Over the shrieking of the gale, and the roaring of the waves, rose that steady, all-pervading sound, which brings horror to the mind of the sailor, — the dull, monotonous thunder of the breakers on the reef of Penmarque. But the "Ariel" was not fated to be ground to pieces on the jagged teeth of the cruel reef. Though she drifted about, the plaything of the winds and the waves, she escaped the jaws of Penmarque. Finally the gale subsided; and, with hastily devised jury-masts, the shattered ship was taken back to l'Orient to refit.

Two months were consumed in the work of getting the shattered vessel ready for sea. When she again set out, she met with no mishap, until, when near the American coast, she fell in with a British vessel to which she gave battle. A sharp action of a quarter of an hour forced the Englishman to strike his colors; but, while the Americans were preparing to board the prize, she sailed away, vastly to the chagrin and indignation of her would-be captors.

The short cruise of the "Ariel" was the last service rendered by Paul Jones to the American Colonies. On his arrival at Philadelphia, he was dined and fêted to his heart's desire; he received a vote of thanks from Congress; he became the idol of the populace. But the necessities of the struggling colonies were such that they were unable to build for him a proper war-ship, and he remained inactive upon shore until the close of the Revolution, when he went abroad, and took service with Russia. He is the one great character in the naval history of the Revolution. He is the first heroic figure in American naval annals. Not until years after his death did men begin to know him at his true worth. He was too often looked upon as a man of no patriotism, but wholly mercenary; courageous, but only with the daring of a pirate. Not until he had died a lonely death, estranged from the country he had so nobly served, did men come to know Paul Jones as a model naval officer, high-minded in his patriotism pure in his life, elevated in his sentiments, and as courageous as a lion.



CHAPTER X.

CAREER OF NICHOLAS BIDDLE. — HIS EXPLOIT AT LEWISTON JAIL. — CRUISE IN THE "RANDOLPH." — BATTLE WITH THE "YARMOUTH." — THE FATAL EXPLOSION. — SAMUEL TUCKER. — HIS BOYHOOD. — ENCOUNTER WITH CORSAIRS. — CRUISING IN THE "FRANKLIN." — IN COMMAND OF THE "BOSTON." — ANECDOTES OF CAPT. TUCKER.

IN THE career of Paul Jones is to be found the record of the most stirring events of the Revolution ; but there were other commanders in the young American navy no less daring than he. As the chief naval representative of the Colonies who cruised in European waters, Jones achieved a notoriety somewhat out of proportion to his actual achievements. But other brave seamen did gallant service along the Atlantic coast for the cause of the struggling nation, and, by their daring and nautical skill, did much to bring the war of the Revolution to its happy conclusion.

We abandoned our consideration of the general naval events of the war, to turn to a recountal of the exploits of Paul Jones at the close of the year 1776. Hostilities on the water during that year were confined to sharp, but short, actions between small men-of-war or privateers. The Americans lacked the discipline and experience necessary to win for themselves any great reputation on the water. Though they showed themselves full of dash and spirit, they were deficient in discipline and staying qualities. Nevertheless, the record of the year was by no means discreditable to so young a naval organization.

Aside from the naval operations on the ocean, the year 1776 had seen the thick clouds of gunpowder-smoke floating across the placid surface of Lake Champlain, while the wooded hills that surrounded that lake and Lake George more than once resounded with thunderous tones of cannon. The hostile meetings of the English and Americans on the interior lakes are hardly to be classed as naval engagements. The vessels were chiefly gondolas and galleys, and many of their crews had never seen salt water. On the British side the forces were more considerable. In October, 1776, the British had on Lake Champlain at least one full-rigged ship; and their schooners and galleys were all manned by trained sailors, drafted from men-of-war laid up in the St. Lawrence. This force was under the command of Capt. Douglass of the frigate "Isis." The Americans, on the contrary, had manned their fleet with recruits from the army; and the forces were under the command of an army-officer, Gen. Benedict Arnold, the story of whose later treachery is familiar to every American. It was late in October that the two hostile fleets met in deadly conflict, and a few short hours were enough to prove to the Americans that they were greatly overmatched. Such of their vessels as were not sunk were captured and burned by the enemy; while their crews escaped into the woods, and ultimately rejoined Arnold's army, from which they had been drafted.

We pass thus hastily over the so-called naval operations on Lake Champlain, because they were properly not naval operations at all, but merely incidents in the shore campaign. The fact that a few soldiers hastily build a small flotilla, and with it give battle to an enemy on the water, does not in any sense constitute a naval battle.

The year 1777 witnessed many notable naval events. Hostilities along the seaboard became more lively. New vessels were put into commission. England despatched a larger naval armament to crush her rebellious colonies. The records of the admiralty show, that at the beginning of that year Parliament voted to the navy forty-five thousand men. The Americans were able to array against this huge force only some four thousand, scattered upon thirteen small vessels-of-war.

One of the first ships to get to sea in this year was the "Randolph;" a new frigate commanded by Nicholas Biddle, who thus early in the war had won the confidence of the people and the naval authorities. In command of the little cruiser "Andrea Doria," Biddle had cruised off the coast of Newfoundland in 1776. His success upon that cruise has already been noted.

Biddle was a man possessing to the fullest degree that primary qualification of a good naval officer,—an indomitable will. In illustration of his determination, a story is related concerning an incident that occurred just as the "Andrea Doria" had left the Capes of the Delaware. Two of her crew had deserted, and, being apprehended by the authorities on shore, were lodged in Lewistown jail. But the sheriff and his deputies found it easier to turn the key on the fugitive tars, than to keep them in control while they lay in durance vile. Gathering all the benches, chairs, and tables that lay about the jail,—for the lockup of those days was not the trim affair of steel and iron seen to-day,—the unrepentant jackies built for themselves a barricade, and, snugly entrenched behind it, shouted out bold defiance to any and all who should come to take them. The jail authorities had committed the foolish error of neglecting to disarm the prisoners when they were captured; and, as each had a brace of ugly pistols in his belt, the position of the two behind their barricade was really one of considerable strength. The prison officials dared not attempt to dislodge the warlike tars. The militia company of the town was ordered to the scene, but even this body of soldiery dared not force the prison door. Accordingly they determined to let time do the work, and starve the rogues out of their retreat. At this juncture Capt. Biddle came ashore. He had no intention of letting his trim ship lie idly in the offing while two mutinous blue-jackets were slowly starved into subjection. The "Andrea Doria" needed the men, and there must be no more delay. A captain in the American navy was not to be defied by two of his own people.

Therefore, seizing a loaded pistol in each hand, Capt. Biddle walked to the prison, accompanied only by a young midshipman. As the two pounded upon the heavy barred door, the crowd outside fell back, expecting the bullets to fly.

"Open this door, Green," shouted Biddle to one of the prisoners, whom he knew by name.

"Try to open it yourself," came the reply from within, with an accompanying oath. "The first man that shows his head inside this door gets a bullet."

Green was known as a bold, desperate man; but Biddle did not hesitate a moment. Ordering the bystanders to break down the door, he waited quietly, until a crash, and the sudden scattering of the crowd, gave notice that the way into the prison was clear. Then gripping his pistols tightly, but with his arms hanging loosely at his sides, he advanced upon the deserters. Behind the barricade stood Green, his eyes blazing with rage, his pistol levelled. Biddle faced him quietly.

"Now, Green, if you don't take a good aim, you are a dead man," said he.

With a muttered curse, the mutineer dropped his weapon. The cool determination of the captain awed him. In a few minutes he, with his companion, was on his way to the ship in irons.

It was in February, 1777, that the stanch new frigate "Randolph," with Biddle in command, set sail from Philadelphia. Hardly had she reached the high seas when a terrific gale set in, from which the "Randolph" emerged, shorn of her tapering masts. As she lay a helpless wreck tossing on the waves, the hard work necessary to put her in decent shape again induced Biddle to accede to the request of a number of British prisoners on board, who wished to be enrolled among the crew of the "Randolph." This proved to be an unfortunate move; for the Englishmen were no sooner enrolled on the ship's list than they began plotting mutiny, and the uprising reached such a stage that they assembled on the gun-deck, and gave three cheers. But the firm and determined stand of the captain and his officers overawed the mutineers, and they returned to their places after the ringleaders had been made to suffer at the gratings. But the spirit of disaffection rife amid his crew, and the crippled condition of his ship, determined Biddle to proceed forthwith to Charleston to refit.

But a few days were spent in port. Getting to sea again, the "Randolph" fell in with the "True Briton," a twenty-gun ship, flying the British colors. Though the captain of the "True Briton" had often boasted of what he would do should he encounter the "Randolph," his courage then failed him, and he fled. The "Randolph" gave chase, and, proving to be a speedy ship, soon overhauled the prize, which struck without waiting for a volley. Three other vessels that had been cruising with the "True Briton" were also captured, and with her rich prizes the "Randolph" returned proudly to Charleston. Here her usefulness ceased for a time; for a superior force of British men-of-war appeared off the harbor, and by them the "Randolph" was blockaded for the remainder of the season.

Early in 1778 Biddle again took the sea with the "Randolph," supported this time by four small vessels, fitted out by the South Carolina authorities. They were the "Gen. Moultrie," eighteen guns; the "Polly," sixteen; the "Notre Dame," sixteen; and the "Fair American," sixteen. With this force Capt. Biddle set out in search of a British squadron known to be cruising thereabouts, and probably the same vessels that had kept him a prisoner during so much of the previous year.

On the 7th of March, 1778, the lookouts on the smaller vessels saw a signal thrown out from the masthead of the "Randolph," which announced a sail in sight. Chase was at once given; and by four o'clock she was near enough for the Americans to see that she was a large ship, and apparently a man-of-war. About eight o'clock the stranger was near enough the squadron for them to make out that she was a heavy frigate.

The Englishman was not slow to suspect the character of the vessels with which he had fallen in, and firing a shot across the bows of the "Moultrie," demanded her name.

"The 'Polly' of New York," was the response.

Leaving the "Moultrie" unmolested, the stranger ranged up alongside the "Randolph," and ordered her to show her colors. This Biddle promptly did; and as the American flag went fluttering to the fore, the ports of the "Randolph" were thrown open, and a broadside poured into the hull of the Englishman. The stranger was not slow in replying, and the action became hot and deadly. Capt. Biddle was wounded in the thigh early in the battle. As he fell to the deck, his officers crowded about him, thinking that he was killed; but he encouraged them to return to their posts, and, ordering a chair to be placed on the quarter-deck, remained on deck, giving orders, and cheering on his men. It is said that Capt. Biddle was wounded by a shot from the "Moultrie," which flew wide of its intended mark.

For twenty minutes the battle raged, and there was no sign of weakening on the part of either contestant. Suddenly the sound of the cannonade was deadened by a thunderous roar. The people on the other ships saw a huge column of fire and smoke rise where the "Randolph" had floated. The English vessel was thrown violently on her beam-ends. The sky was darkened with flying timbers and splinters, which fell heavily into the sea. The "Randolph" had blown up. A spark, a red-hot shot, some fiery object, had penetrated her magazine, and she was annihilated.

The horrible accident which destroyed the "Randolph" came near being the end of the "Yarmouth," her antagonist. The two battling ships were close together; so close, in fact, that after the explosion Capt. Morgan of the "Fair American" hailed the "Yarmouth" to ask how Capt. Biddle was. The English ship was fairly covered with bits of the flying wreck. Some heavy pieces of timber falling from the skies badly shattered her main-deck. An American ensign, closely rolled up, fell on her forecastle, not even singed by the fiery ordeal through which it had passed.

The "Yarmouth" wasted little time in wonder over the fate of her late antagonist. In all the mass of floating wreckage that covered the sea, there appeared to be no living thing. The four smaller American vessels, dismayed by the fate of their consort, were making good their escape. Without more ado, the "Yarmouth" set out in chase.

Four days later, the Americans having escaped, the "Yarmouth" was again cruising near the scene of the action. A raft was discovered on the ocean, which seemed to support some living creatures. Running down upon it, four wretched, emaciated men were discovered clinging to a piece of wreckage, and wildly waving for assistance. They were taken aboard the British man-of-war, and given food and drink, of both of which they partook greedily; for their sole sustenance during the four days for which they clung to their frail raft was rain-water sucked from a piece of blanket.

So died Capt. Nicholas Biddle, blown to atoms by the explosion of his ship in the midst of battle. Though but a young officer, not having completed his twenty-seventh year, he left an enduring name in the naval annals of his country. Though his service was short, the fame he won was great.

Among the more notable commanders who did good service on the sea was Capt. Samuel Tucker, who was put in command of the frigate "Boston" in the latter part of the year 1777. Tucker was an old and tried seaman, and is furthermore one of the most picturesque figures in the naval history of the Revolution. He first showed his love for the sea in the way that Yankee boys from time immemorial have shown it, — by running away from home, and shipping as a cabin-boy. The ship which he chose was the British sloop-of-war "Royal George," and the boy found himself face to face with the rigid naval discipline of the British service at that time. But he stuck manfully to the career he had chosen, and gradually mastered not only the details of a seaman's duty, but much of the art of navigation; so that when finally he got his discharge from the "Royal George," he shipped as second mate on a Salem merchantman. It was on his first voyage in this capacity that he first showed the mettle that was in him. Two Algerine corsairs, their decks crowded with men, their long low hulls cleaving the waves like dolphins, had given chase to the merchantman. The captain of the threatened ship grew faint-hearted: he sought courage in liquor, and soon became unable to manage his vessel. Tucker took the helm. He saw that there was no chance of escape in flight, for the corsairs were too fleet. There was no hope of victory in a battle, for the pirates were too strong. But the trim New England schooner minded her helm better than her lanteen-rigged pursuers, and this fact Tucker put to good account.

Putting his helm hard down, he headed the schooner directly for the piratical craft. By skilful manœuvring, he secured such a position that either pirate, by firing upon him, was in danger of firing into his fellow corsair. This position he managed to maintain until nightfall, when he slipped away, and by daylight was snugly at anchor in the port of Lisbon.

For some time after this episode, the record of Tucker's seafaring life is lost. Certain it is that he served in the British navy as an officer for some time, and was master of a merchantman for several years.

When the Revolution broke out, Samuel Tucker was in London. Being offered by a recruiting officer a commission in either the army or navy, if he would consent to serve "his gracious Majesty," Tucker very rashly responded, "Hang his gracious Majesty! Do you think I would serve against my country?"

Soon a hue and cry was out for Tucker. He was charged with treason, and fled into the country to the house of a tavern-keeper whom he knew, who sheltered him until he could make his escape from England.

Hardly had he arrived in America, when Gen. Washington commissioned him captain of the "Franklin," and instructed him to proceed directly to sea. An express with the commission and instructions was hurried off to Marblehead, then a straggling little city. He was instructed to find the "Hon. Samuel Tucker," and to deliver to him the packets in his charge. When the messenger arrived, Tucker was working in his yard. The messenger saw a rough-looking person, roughly clad, with a tarpaulin hat, and his neck bound with a flaming red bandanna handkerchief. Never once thinking this person could be the man he sought, he leaned from his horse, and shouted out roughly, —

"I say, fellow, I wish you would tell me whether the Hon. Samuel Tucker lives hereabouts."

Tucker looked up with a quizzical smile, and surveyed the speaker from under the wide rim of his tarpaulin, as he answered, —

"Honorable, honorable! There's none of that name in Marblehead. He must be one of the Tuckers in Salem. I'm the only Samuel Tucker here."

"Capt. Glover told me he knew him," responded the messenger, "and described his house, gable-end on the seaside, none near it. Faith, this looks like the very place!"

With a laugh, Tucker then confessed his identity, and asked the messenger his business. Receiving the commission and instructions, he at once began his preparations for leaving home, and at daybreak the next morning was on his way to Beverly, where lay anchored the first ship he was to command in the service of his country.

In the "Franklin" Capt. Tucker did some most efficient work. His name appears constantly in the letters of Gen. Washington, and in the State papers making up the American archives, as having sent in valuable prizes. At one time we read of the capture of "a brigantine from Scotland, worth fifteen thousand pounds sterling;" again, of six gun-boats, and of brigs laden with wine and fruit. During the year 1776, he took not less than thirty — and probably a few more — ships, brigs, and smaller vessels. Nor were all these vessels taken without some sharp fighting.

Of one battle Tucker himself speaks in one of his letters. First telling how his wife made the colors for his ship, "the field of which was white, and the union was green, made of cloth of her own purchasing, and at her own expense," he goes on to write of one of his battles: —

"Those colors I wore in honor of the country, — which has so nobly rewarded me for my past services, — and the love of their maker, until I fell in with Col. Archibald Campbell in the ship "George," and brig "Arabella," transports with about two hundred and eighty Highland troops on board, of Gen. Frazer's corps. About ten P.M. a severe conflict ensued, which held about two hours and twenty minutes. I conquered them with great carnage on their side, it being in the night, and my small bark, about seventy tons burden, being very low in the water, I received no damage in loss of men, but lost a complete set of new sails by the passing of their balls; then the white field and pine-tree union were riddled to atoms. I was then immediately supplied with a new suit of sails, and a new suit of colors, made of canvas and bunting of my own prize-goods."

Another time, during the same year, Tucker took two British ships near Marblehead. So near was the scene of action to the house of Capt. Tucker, that his wife and her sister, hearing the sound of cannonading, ascended a high hill in the vicinity, and from that point viewed the action through a spy-glass.

Capt. Tucker kept the sea in the "Franklin" until late in the winter. When finally the cold weather and high winds forced him to put his ship out of commission, he went to his home at Marblehead. He remained there but a short time; for in March, 1777, he was put in command of the "Boston," a frigate of twenty-four guns. In this vessel he cruised during the year with varying success.

Feb. 10, 1778, Capt. Tucker was ordered to carry the Hon. John Adams to France, as envoy from the United States. The voyage was full of incidents. Feeling impressed with the gravity of the charge laid upon him, Capt. Tucker chose a course which he hoped would enable him to steer clear of the horde of British men-of-war which then infested the American coast. But in so doing he fell in with a natural enemy, which came near proving fatal. A terrific thunderstorm, gradually growing into a tornado, crossed the path of the ship. The ocean was lashed into waves mountain high. The crash of the thunder rent the sky. A stroke of lightning struck the main-mast, and ripped up the deck, narrowly missing the magazine. The ship sprung a leak; and the grewsome sound of the pumps mingled with the roar of the waves, and the shrieking of the winds. For several days the stormy weather continued. Then followed a period of calm, which the captain well employed in repairing the rigging, and exercising the men with the guns and small-arms. Many ships had been sighted, and some, evidently men-of-war, had given chase; but the "Boston" succeeded in showing them all a clean pair of heels.

"What would you do," said Mr. Adams one day, as he stood with the captain watching three ships that were making desperate efforts to overhaul the "Boston," "if you could not escape, and they should attack you?"

"As the first is far in advance of the others, I should carry her by boarding, leading the boarders myself," was the response. "I should take her; for no doubt a majority of her crew, being pressed men, would turn to and join me. Having taken her, I should be matched, and could fight the other two."

Such language as this coming from many men would be considered mere foolhardy boasting. But Tucker was a man not given to brag. Indeed, he was apt to be very laconic in speaking of his exploits. A short time after his escape from the three ships, he fell in with an English armed vessel of no small force, and captured her. His only comment on the action in his journal reads, "I fired a gun, and they returned three; and down went the colors."

John Adams, however, told a more graphic story of this capture. Tucker, as soon as he saw an armed vessel in his path, hastily called his crew to order, and bore down upon her. When the roll of the drum, calling the people to quarters, resounded through the ship, Mr. Adams seized a musket, and took his stand with the marines. Capt. Tucker, seeing him there, requested him to go below, and upon his desire being disregarded, put his hand upon the envoy's shoulder, and in a tone of authority said, —

"Mr. Adams, I am commanded by the Continental Congress to deliver you safe in France, and you must go below."

The envoy smilingly complied, and just at that moment the enemy let fly her broadside. The shot flew through the rigging, doing but little damage. Though the guns of the "Boston" were shotted, and the gunners stood at their posts with smoking match-stocks, Capt. Tucker gave no order to fire, but seemed intent upon the manœuvres of the ships. The eager blue-jackets begun to murmur, and the chorus of questions and oaths was soon so great that the attention of Tucker was attracted. He looked at the row of eager faces on the gun-deck, and shouted out, —

"Hold on, my men! I wish to save that egg without breaking the shell."

Soon after, Tucker brought his broadside to bear on the stern of the enemy, and she struck without more ado. She proved to be an armed ship, the "Martha."

After this encounter, nothing more of moment occurred on the voyage; and the "Boston" reached Bordeaux, and landed her distinguished passenger in safety. Two months later she left Bordeaux, in company with a fleet of twenty sail, one of which was the "Ranger," formerly commanded by Paul Jones. With these vessels he cruised for a time in European waters, but returned to the American coast in the autumn. His services for the rest of that year, and the early part of 1779, we must pass over hastily, though many were the prizes that fell into his clutches.

Many anecdotes are told of Tucker. His shrewdness, originality, and daring made him a favorite theme for story-tellers. But, unhappily, the anecdotes have generally no proof of their truth. One or two, however, told by Capt. Tucker's biographer, Mr. John H. Sheppard, will not be out of place here.

In one the story is told that Tucker fell in with a British frigate which he knew to be sent in search of him. Showing the English flag, he sailed boldly towards the enemy, and in answer to her hail said he was Capt. Gordon of the English navy, out in search of the "Boston," commanded by the rebel Tucker.

"I'll carry him to New York, dead or alive," said Tucker.

"Have you seen him?" was asked.

"Well, I've heard of him," was the response; "and they say he is a hard customer."

All this time Tucker had been manœuvring to secure a raking position. Behind the closed ports of the "Boston," the men stood at their guns, ready for the word of command. Just as the American had secured the position desired, a sailor in the tops of the British vessel cried out, —

"That is surely Tucker; we shall have a devil of a smell directly."

Hearing this, Tucker ordered the American flag hoisted, and the ports thrown open. Hailing his astonished foe, he cried, —

"The time I proposed talking with you is ended. This is the 'Boston,' frigate. I am Samuel Tucker, but no rebel. Fire, or strike your flag."

The Englishman saw he had no alternative but to strike. This he did without firing a gun. The vessel, though not named in the anecdote, was probably the "Pole," of the capture of which Tucker frequently speaks in his letters.

Of the part Tucker played in the siege of Charleston, of his capture there by the British, and of his exchange, we shall speak later. At that disaster four American frigates were lost: so many of the best naval officers were thrown out of employment. Among them was Tucker; but ever anxious for active service, he obtained the sloop-of-war "Thorn," which he himself had captured, and went out as a privateer. In this vessel he saw some sharp service. One engagement was thus described to Mr. Sheppard by a marine named Everett who was on board: —

"We had been cruising about three weeks when we fell in with an English packet of twenty-two guns and one hundred men. Not long after she was discovered, the commodore called up his crew, and said, 'She means to fight us; and if we go alongside like men, she is ours in thirty minutes, but if we can't go as men we have no business here.' He then told them he wanted no cowards on deck, and requested those who were willing to fight to go down the starboard, and those who were unwilling the larboard gangway. Every man and boy took the first, signifying his willingness to meet the enemy.

"As Mr. Everett was passing by, the commodore asked him, —

"'Are you willing to go alongside of her?'

"'Yes, sir,' was the reply.

"In mentioning this conversation, however, Mr. Everett candidly confessed, 'I did not tell him the truth, for I would rather have been in my father's cornfield.'

"After the commanders of these two vessels, as they drew near, had hailed each other in the customary way when ships meet at sea, the captain of the English packet cried out roughly from the quarter-deck, —

"'Haul down your colors, or I'll sink you!'

"'Ay, ay, sir; directly,' answered Tucker calmly. And he then ordered the helmsman to steer the 'Thorn' right under the stern of the packet, luff up under her lee quarters, and range alongside of her. The order was promptly executed. The two vessels were laid side by side, within pistol shot of each other. While the 'Thorn' was getting into position, the enemy fired a full broadside at her which did but little damage. As soon as she was brought completely alongside her adversary, Tucker thundered out to his men to fire, and a tremendous discharge followed; and, as good aim had been taken, a dreadful carnage was seen in that ill-fated vessel. It was rapidly succeeded by a fresh volley of artillery, and in twenty-seven minutes a piercing cry was heard from the English vessel: 'Quarters, for God's sake! Our ship is sinking. Our men are dying of their wounds.'

"To this heart-rending appeal Capt. Tucker exclaimed, —

"'How can you expect quarters while that British flag is flying?'

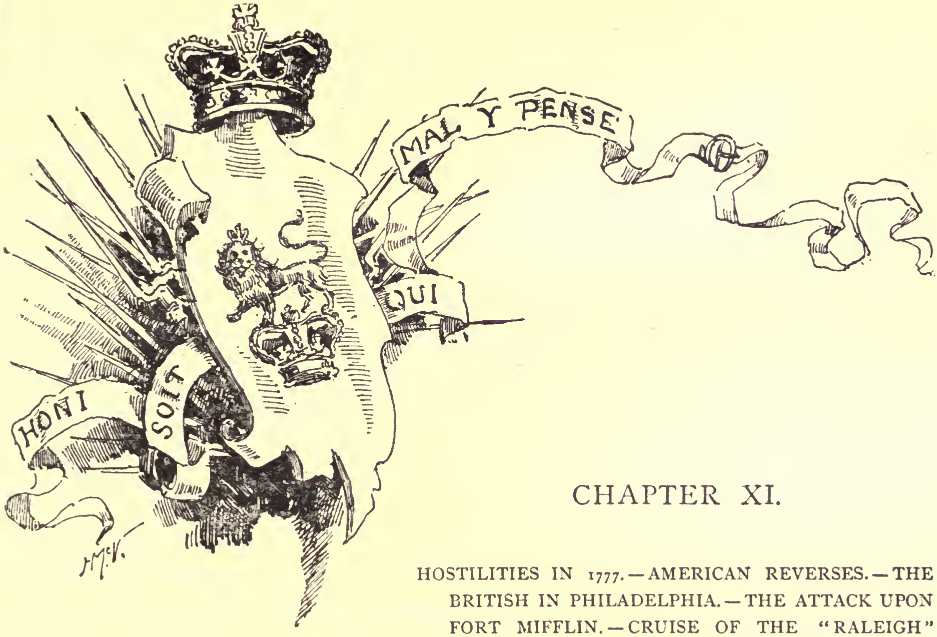
"The sad answer came back, 'Our halliards are shot away.'

"'Then cut away your ensign staff, or ye'll all be dead men.'

"It was done immediately. Down came the colors, the din of cannonading ceased, and only the groans of the wounded and dying were heard.

"Fifteen men, with carpenters, surgeon, and their leader, were quickly on the deck of the prize. Thirty-four of her crew, with her captain, were either killed or wounded. Her decks were besmeared with blood, and in some places it stood in clotted masses to the tops of the sailors' slippers. The gloomy but needful work of amputating limbs, and laying out the dead, was begun; and every effort was made to render the wounded prisoners as comfortable as possible."

Here we must take leave of Commodore Tucker and his exploits. As a privateersman, he continued to do daring work to the end of the war. He fought at least one more bloody action. He was captured once and escaped. But the recountal of his romantic career must now yield to our chronological survey of the lesser naval events of the Revolution.



CHAPTER XI.

HOSTILITIES IN 1777.—AMERICAN REVERSES.—THE BRITISH IN PHILADELPHIA.—THE ATTACK UPON FORT MIFFLIN.—CRUISE OF THE "RALEIGH" AND THE "ALFRED."—TORPEDO WARFARE.—THE BATTLE OF THE KEGS.

WE HAVE now heard of the exploits of some of the chief naval leaders of the war of the Revolution. But there were many dashing engagements in which the great commanders took no part, and many important captures made by vessels sailing under the flags of the individual colonies, which deserve attention.

The American cause on the water suffered some rather severe reverses in the early part of 1777. In March, the brig "Cabot" fell in with the British frigate "Milford," and was so hard pressed that she was run ashore on the coast of Nova Scotia. The crew had hardly time to get ashore before the British took possession of the stranded craft. The Americans were left helpless, in a wild and little settled country, but finally made their way through the woods to a harbor. Here they found a coasting schooner lying at anchor, upon which they promptly seized, and in which they escaped to Portsmouth. In the mean time, the British had got the "Cabot" afloat again.

Two months later, or in the early part of May, two United States vessels, the "Hancock" thirty-two, Capt. Manly, and the "Boston" twenty-four, Capt. Hector McNeil, sailed in company from Boston. When a few days out, a strange sail was sighted, and proved to be a British frigate. The "Hancock" soon came near enough to her to exchange broadsides, as the two vessels were going on opposite tacks. The enemy, however, seemed anxious to avoid a conflict, and exerted every effort to escape. Manly, having great confidence in the speed of his ship, gave chase. Calling the people from the guns, he bade them make a leisurely breakfast, and get ready for the work before them. The "Hancock" soon overhauled the chase, which began firing her guns as fast as they would bear. The Americans, however, made no response until fairly alongside, when they let fly a broadside with ringing cheers. The action lasted for an hour and a half before the enemy struck. She proved to be the "Fox," twenty-eight. She was badly cut up by the American fire, and had thirty-two dead and wounded men on board. The loss on the "Hancock" amounted to only eight men. In this running fight the "Boston" was hopelessly distanced, coming up just in time to fire a gun as the British ensign came fluttering from the peak.

Putting a prize crew on the "Fox," the three vessels continued their cruise. A week passed, and no sail was seen. Somewhat rashly Capt. Manly turned his ship's prow toward Halifax, then, as now, the chief British naval station on the American coast. When the three ships appeared off the entrance to the harbor of Halifax, the British men-of-war inside quickly spied them, raised anchor, and came crowding out in hot pursuit. There was the "Rainbow" forty-four, the "Flora" thirty-two, and the "Victor" eighteen, besides two others whose names could not be ascertained. The Americans saw that they had stirred up a nest of hornets, and sought safety in flight. The three British vessels whose names are given gave chase. The "Boston," by her swift sailing, easily kept out of the reach of the enemy. The "Fox," however, was quickly overhauled by the "Flora," and struck her flag after exchanging a few broadsides. The "Hancock" for a time seemed likely to escape, but at last the "Rainbow" began gradually to overhaul her. Capt. Manly, finding escape impossible, began manœuvring with the intention of boarding his powerful adversary; but the light winds made this impossible, and he suddenly found himself under the guns of the "Rainbow," with the "Victor" astern, in a raking position. Seeing no hope for success in so unequal a conflict, Manly struck his flag. In the mean time the "Boston" had calmly proceeded upon her way, leaving her consorts to their fate. For having thus abandoned his superior officer, Capt. McNeil was dismissed the service upon his return to Boston.

These losses were to some degree offset by the good fortune of the "Trumbull," twenty-eight, in command of Capt. Saltonstall. She left New York in April of this year, and had been on the water but a few days when she fell in with two British armed vessels of no inconsiderable force. The Englishmen, confident of their ability to beat off the cruiser, made no effort to avoid a conflict. Capt. Saltonstall, by good seamanship, managed to put his vessel between the two hostile ships, and then worked both batteries with such vigor, that, after half-an-hour's fighting, the enemy was glad to strike. In this action the Americans lost seven men killed, and eight wounded. The loss of the enemy was not reported. This capture was of the greatest importance to the American cause, for the two prizes were loaded with military and naval stores.

During the year 1777, the occupation of Philadelphia by the British army, under Gen. Howe, led to some activity on the part of the American navy. While Philadelphia had been in the possession of the Continentals, it had been a favorite naval rendezvous. Into the broad channel of the Delaware the American cruisers had been accustomed to retreat when the British naval force along the coast became threateningly active. At the broad wharves of Philadelphia, the men-of-war laid up to have necessary repairs made. In the rope-walks of the town, the cordage for the gallant Yankee ships was spun. In the busy shipyards along the Delaware, many of the frigates, provided for by the Act of 1775, were built.

In the summer of 1777 all this was changed. Sir William Howe, at the head of an irresistible army, marched upon Philadelphia; and, defeating the American army at Brandywine, entered the city in triumph. The privateers and men-of-war scattered hastily, to avoid capture. Most of them fled down the Delaware; but a few, chiefly vessels still uncompleted, ascended the river.

To cut off these vessels, the British immediately commenced the erection of batteries to command the channel of the river, and prevent any communication between the American vessels above and below Philadelphia. To check the erection of these batteries, the American vessels "Delaware" twenty-four, and "Andrea Doria" fourteen, together with one or two vessels flying the Pennsylvania flag, took up a position before the incomplete earthworks, and opened a heavy fire upon the soldiers employed in the trenches. So accurate was the aim of the American gunners, that work on the batteries was stopped. But, unluckily, the commander of the "Delaware," Capt. Alexander, had failed to reckon on the swift outflowing of the tide; and just as the sailors on that ship were becoming jubilant over the prospect of a victory, a mighty quiver throughout the ship told that she had been left on a shoal by the ebb tide. The enemy was not long in discovering the helpless condition of the "Delaware;" and field-pieces and siege-guns were brought down to the river-bank, until the luckless Americans saw themselves commanded by a heavy battery. In this unhappy predicament there was no course remaining but to strike their flag.

Though the British had possession of Philadelphia, and virtually controlled the navigation of the river at that point, the Americans still held powerful positions at Red Bank and at Fort Mifflin, lower down the river. Against the former post the British sent an unsuccessful land expedition of Hessians, but against Fort Mifflin a naval expedition was despatched.

Fort Mifflin was built on a low marshy island near the mouth of the Schuylkill. Its very situation, surrounded as it was by mud and water, made it impregnable to any land attack. While the fort itself was a fairly strong earthwork, laid out upon approved principles of engineering, its outer works of defence added greatly to its strength. In the main channels of the river were sunk heavy, sharp-pointed *chevaux de frise*, or submarine palisades, with sharp points extending just above the surface of the water. In addition to this obstacle, the enemy advancing by water upon the fort would have to meet the American flotilla, which, though composed of small craft only, was large enough to prove very annoying to an enemy. In this flotilla were thirteen galleys, one carrying a thirty-two pounder, and the rest with varying weight of ordnance; twenty-six half-galleys, each carrying a four-pounder; two xebecs, each with two twenty-four-pounders in the bow, two eighteen-pounders in the stern, and four nine-pounders in the waist; two floating batteries, fourteen fire-ships, one schooner-galley, one brig-galley, one provincial ship, and the brig "Andrea Doria." It was no small naval force that the British had to overcome before attacking the mud ramparts and bastions of Fort Mifflin.

Against this armament the British brought a number of vessels, with the "Augusta," sixty-four, in the lead. The battle was begun late in the afternoon of the 22d of October, 1777. The attack of the Hessians upon the American fortifications at Red Bank, and the opening of the action between the British and American fleets, were simultaneous. The Hessians were beaten back with heavy loss, some of the American vessels opening fire upon them from the river. The naval battle lasted but a short time that night, owing to the darkness. When the battle ended for the night, the "Augusta," and the "Merlin," sloop-of-war, were left hard and fast aground.

The next morning the British advanced again to the attack. The skirmish of the night before had shown them that the Yankee flotilla was no mean adversary; and they now brought up re-inforcements, in the shape of the "Roebuck" forty-four, "Isis" thirty-two, "Pearl" thirty-two, and "Liverpool" twenty-eight. No sooner had the British squadron come within range than a heavy fire was opened upon the fort. The American flotilla was prompt to answer the challenge, and soon the action became general. Time and time again the Americans sent huge fire-ships, their well-tarred spars and rigging blazing fiercely, down among the enemy. But the skill and activity of the British sailors warded off this danger. Thereupon the Americans, seeing that they could not rely upon their fire-ships, changed their plan of action. Any one of the British vessels was more than a match for the largest American craft, so the Yankees saw they must rely upon force of numbers. Accordingly their larger vessels were each assigned to attack one of the enemy; while the swift-sailing galleys plied to and fro in the battle, lending aid where needed, and striking a blow wherever the opportunity offered itself. This course of action soon began to tell upon the British. All of their vessels began to show the effects of the American fire. The "Augusta" was in flames, owing to some pressed hay that had been packed upon her quarter having been set on fire. Despite the efforts of her crew, the flames spread rapidly. Seeing no chance to save the vessel, the crew abandoned her, and sought to gain the protection of other vessels of the British fleet. But the other ships, seeing the flames on the

"Augusta" drawing closer and closer to the magazine, and knowing that her explosion in that narrow and crowded channel would work dreadful damage among them, determined to abandon the attack upon Fort Mifflin, and withdrew. The "Merlin," which was hard and fast aground, was fired, and the British fled. As they turned their ships' prows down the Delaware, the dull sullen roar of an explosion told that the "Augusta" had met her end. Soon after the "Merlin" blew up, and the defeat of the British was complete.

But, though worsted in this attack upon Fort Mifflin, the British did not wholly abandon their designs upon it. Immediately upon their repulse, they began their preparations for a second attack. This time they did not propose to rely upon men-of-war alone. Batteries were built upon every point of land within range of Fort Mifflin. Floating batteries were built, and towed into position. By the 10th of November all was ready, and upon that day a tremendous cannonade was opened upon the American works. After two days of ceaseless bombardment, the garrison of the fort was forced to surrender. Since the fall of Fort Mifflin gave the control of the Delaware to the British, the Americans immediately put the torch to the "Andrea Doria" fourteen, the "Wasp" eight, and the "Hornet" ten; while the galleys skulked away along the Jersey coast, in search of places of retreat.

While the Yankee tars on river and harbor duty were thus getting their share of fighting, there was plenty of daring work being done on the high seas. One of the most important cruises of the year was that of the "Raleigh" and the "Alfred." The "Raleigh" was one of the twelve-pounder frigates built under the naval Act of 1775. With her consort the "Alfred," she left the American coast in the summer of 1777, bound for France, in search of naval stores that were there awaiting transportation to the United States. Both vessels were short-handed.

On the 2d of September the two vessels overhauled and captured the snow "Nancy," from England, bound for the West Indies. Her captain reported that he had sailed from the West Indies with a fleet of sixty merchantmen, under the convoy of four small men-of-war, the "Camel," the "Druid," the "Weasel," and the "Grasshopper." The poor sailing qualities of the "Nancy" had forced her to drop behind, and the fleet was then about a day in advance of her.

Crowding on all canvas, the two American ships set out in hot pursuit. From the captain of the "Nancy" Capt. Thompson of the "Raleigh" had obtained all the signals in use in the fleet of Indiamen. The next morning the fleet was made out; and the "Raleigh" and the "Alfred" exchanged signals, as though they were part of the convoy. They hung about the outskirts of the fleet until dark, planning, when the night should fall, to make a dash into the enemy's midst, and cut out the chief armed vessel.

But at nightfall the wind changed, so that the plan of the Americans was defeated. At daylight, however, the wind veered round and freshened, so that the "Raleigh," crowding on more sail, was soon in the very centre of the enemy's fleet. The "Alfred," unfortunately, being unable to carry so great a spread of canvas, was left behind; and the "Raleigh" remained to carry out alone her daring adventure.

The "Raleigh" boldly steered straight into the midst of the British merchantmen, exchanging signals with some, and hailing others. Her ports were lowered, and her guns on deck housed, so that there appeared about her nothing to indicate her true character. Having cruised about amid the merchantmen, she drew up alongside the nearest man-of-war, and when within pistol-shot, suddenly ran up her flag, threw open her ports, and commanded the enemy to strike.

All was confusion on board the British vessel. Her officers had never for a moment suspected the "Raleigh" of being other than one of their own fleet. While they stood aghast, not even keeping the vessel on her course, the "Raleigh" poured in a broadside. The British responded faintly with a few guns. Deliberately the Americans let fly another broadside, which did great execution. The enemy were driven from their guns, but doggedly refused to strike, holding out, doubtless, in the hope that the cannonade might draw to their assistance some of the other armed ships accompanying the fleet.

While the unequal combat was raging, a heavy squall came rushing over the water. The driving sheets of rain shut in the combatants, and only by the thunders of the cannonade could the other vessels tell that a battle was being fought in their midst.

When the squall had passed by, the affrighted merchantmen were seen scudding in every direction, like a school of flying-fish into whose midst some rapacious shark or dolphin has intruded himself. But the three men-of-war, with several armed West-Indiamen in their wake, were fast bearing down upon the combatants, with the obvious intention of rescuing their comrade, and punishing the audacious Yankee.

The odds against Thompson were too great; and after staying by his adversary until the last possible moment, and pouring broadside after broadside into her, he abandoned the fight and rejoined the "Alfred." The two ships hung on the flanks of the fleet for some days, in the hopes of enticing two of the men-of-war out to join in battle. But all was to no avail, and the Americans were forced to content themselves with the scant glory won in the incomplete action of the "Raleigh." Her adversary proved to be the "Druid," twenty, which suffered severely from the "Raleigh's" repeated broadsides, having six killed, and twenty-six wounded; of the wounded, five died immediately after the battle.

It was during the year 1777 that occurred the first attempt to use gunpowder in the shape of a submarine torpedo. This device, which to-day threatens to overturn all established ideas of naval organization and architecture, originated with a clever Connecticut mechanic named David Bushnell. His invention covered not only submarine torpedoes, to be launched against a vessel, but a submarine boat in which an adventurous navigator might undertake to go beneath the hull of a man-of-war, and affix the torpedoes, so that failure should be impossible. This boat in shape was not unlike a turtle. A system of valves, air-pumps, and ballast enabled the operator to ascend or descend in the water at will. A screw-propeller afforded means of propulsion, and phosphorescent gauges and compasses enabled him to steer with some accuracy.

Preliminary tests made with this craft were uniformly successful. After a skilled operator had been obtained, the boat perfectly discharged the duties required of her. But, as is so often the case, when the time for action came she proved inadequate to the emergency. Let her inventor tell the story in his own words: —

"After various attempts to find an operator to my wish, I sent one, who appeared to be more expert than the rest, from New York, to a fifty-gun ship, lying not far from Governor's Island. He went under the ship, and attempted to fix the wooden screw to her bottom, but struck, as he supposes, a bar of iron, which passes from the rudder hinge, and is spiked under the ship's quarter. Had he moved a few inches, which he might have done without rowing, I have no doubt he would have found wood where he might have fixed the screw; or, if the ship were sheathed with copper, he might easily have pierced it. But not being well skilled in the management of the vessel, in attempting to move to another place, he lost the ship. After seeking her in vain for some time, he rowed some distance, and rose to the surface of the water, but found daylight had advanced so far that he durst not renew the attempt. He says that he could easily have fastened the magazine under the stern of the ship above water, as he rowed up to the stern and touched it before he descended. Had he fastened it there, the explosion of a hundred and fifty pounds of powder (the quantity contained in the magazine) must have been fatal to the ship. In his return from the ship to New York, he passed near Governor's Island, and thought he was discovered by the enemy on the island. Being in haste to avoid the danger he feared, he cast off the magazine, as he imagined it retarded him in the swell, which was very considerable. After the magazine had been cast off one hour, the time the internal apparatus was set to run, it blew up with great violence.

"Afterwards there were two attempts made in Hudson's River, above the city; but they effected nothing. One of them was by the aforementioned person. In going toward the ship, he lost sight of her, and went a great distance beyond her. When he at length found her, the tide ran so strong, that, as he descended under water, for the ship's bottom, it swept him away. Soon after this, the enemy went up the river, and pursued the boat which had the submarine vessel on board, and sunk it with their shot."

So it appears, that, so far as this submarine vessel was concerned, Bushnell's great invention came to naught. And, indeed, it was but the first of a long line of experiments which have been terribly costly in human life, and which as yet have not been brought to a successful end. In every war there comes forward the inventor with the submarine boat, and he always finds a few brave men ready to risk their lives in the floating coffin. Somewhere in Charleston Harbor to-day lies a submarine boat, enclosing the skeletons of eight men, who went out in it to break the blockade of the port during the civil war. And although there are to-day several types of submarine boat, each of which is claimed to make practicable the navigation of the ocean's depths, yet it is doubtful whether any of them are much safer than Bushnell's primitive "turtle."

But Bushnell's experiments in torpedo warfare were not confined to attempts to destroy hostile vessels by means of his submarine vessel. He made several attacks upon the enemy by means of automatic torpedoes, none of which met with complete success. One of these attacks, made at Philadelphia in December, 1777, furnished the incident upon which is founded the well-known ballad of the "Battle of the Kegs."

It was at a time when the Delaware was filled with British shipping, that Bushnell set adrift upon its swift-flowing tide a number of small kegs, filled with gunpowder, and provided with percussion apparatus, so that contact with any object would explode them. The kegs were started on their voyage at night. But Bushnell had miscalculated the distance they had to travel; so that, instead of reaching the British fleet under cover of darkness, they arrived early in the morning. Great was the wonder of the British sentries, on ship and shore, to see the broad bosom of the river dotted with floating kegs. As the author of the satirical ballad describes it, —

"'Twas early day, as poets say,
  Just as the sun was rising;
A soldier stood on a log of wood
  And saw the sun a-rising.

As in·amaze he stood to gaze
  (The truth can't be denied, sir),
He spied a score of kegs, or more,
  Come floating down the tide, sir.

A sailor, too, in jerkin blue,
  The strange appearance viewing,
First d——d his eyes in great surprise,
  Then said, 'Some mischief's brewing.'

These kegs, I'm told, the rebels hold,
  Packed up like pickled herring;
And they've come down to attack the town
  In this new way of ferrying."

The curiosity of the British at this inexplicable spectacle gave place to alarm, when one of the kegs, being picked up, blew up a boat, and seriously injured the man whose curiosity had led him to examine it too closely. Half panic-stricken, the British got out their guns, great and small; and all day every small object on the Delaware was the target for a lively fusillade.

"The cannons roar from shore to shore,
The small arms loud did rattle.
Since wars began, I'm sure no man
E'er saw so strange a battle.

The fish below swam to and fro,
Attacked from every quarter.
'Why sure' (thought they), 'the devil's to pay,
'Mong folk above the water.' "

But in the end the kegs all floated by the city, and only the ammunition stores of the British suffered from the attack.

Another attempt was made by Bushnell to destroy the British frigate "Cerberus," lying at anchor off the Connecticut coast. A torpedo, with the usual percussion apparatus, was drawn along the side of the frigate by a long line, but fouled with a schooner lying astern. The explosion occurred with frightful force, and the schooner was wholly demolished. Three men who were on board of her were blown to pieces; and a fourth was thrown high into the air, and was picked out of the water in an almost dying condition.

These experiments of the Connecticut mechanic in the Revolutionary war were the forerunner of a movement which took almost a hundred years to become generally accepted. We have been accustomed to say that Ericsson's armor-clad monitor revolutionized naval warfare; but the perfection of the torpedo is forcing the armor-clad ships into disuse, as they in their day thrust aside the old wooden frigates. The wise nation to-day, seeing how irresistible is the power of the torpedo, is abandoning the construction of cumbrous iron-clads, and building light, swift cruisers, that by speed and easy steering can avoid the submarine enemy. And if the torpedo cannot be said to be the ideal weapon of chivalric warfare, it may at least in time be credited with doing away with the custom of cooping men up in wrought-iron boxes, to fight with machine guns. Farragut, who hated iron-clads, liked torpedoes little better; but had he foreseen their effects upon naval tactics, he might have hailed them as the destroyers of the iron-clad ships.

IN THE NAME OF GREAT BRITAIN.

CHAPTER XII.

NAVAL EVENTS OF 1778. — RECRUITING FOR THE NAVY. — THE DESCENT UPON NEW PROVIDENCE. — OPERATIONS ON THE DELAWARE. — CAPT. BARRY'S EXPLOITS. — DESTRUCTION OF THE AMERICAN FRIGATES. — AMERICAN REVERSES. — THE CAPTURE OF THE "PIGOT." — FRENCH NAVAL EXPLOITS.

THE year 1778 opened with the brightest prospects for the American cause. The notable success of the American arms on land, and particularly the surrender of Burgoyne, had favorably disposed France toward an alliance with the United States; and, in fact, this alliance was soon formed. Furthermore, the evidence of the prowess of the Americans on shore had stirred up the naval authorities to vigorous action, and it was determined to make the year 1778 a notable one upon the ocean.

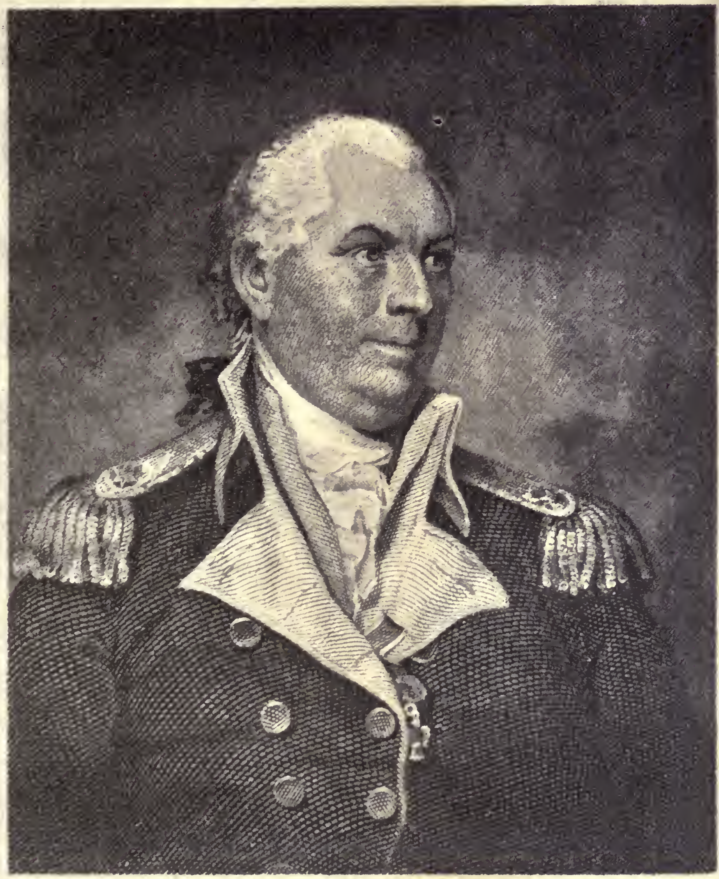
Much difficulty was found, at the very outset, in getting men to ship for service on the regular cruisers. Privateers were being fitted out in every port; and on them the life was easy, discipline slack, danger to life small, and the prospects for financial reward far greater than on the United States men-of-war. Accordingly, the seafaring men as a rule preferred to ship on the privateers. At no time in the history of the United States has the barbaric British custom of getting sailors for the navy by means of the "press-gang" been followed. American blue-jackets have never been impressed by force. It is unfortunately true that unfair advantages have been taken of their simplicity, and sometimes they have even been shipped while under the influence of liquor; but such cases have been rare. It is safe to say that few men have ever trod the deck of a United States man-of-war, as members of the crew, without being there of their own free will and accord.

But in 1777 it was sometimes hard to fill the ships' rosters. Then the ingenuity of the recruiting officers was called into play. A sailor who served on the "Protector" during the Revolution thus tells the story of his enlistment: —

"All means were resorted to which ingenuity could devise to induce men to enlist. A recruiting officer, bearing a flag, and attended by a band of martial music, paraded the streets, to excite a thirst for glory and a spirit of military ambition. The recruiting officer possessed the qualifications necessary to make the service appear alluring, especially to the young. He was a jovial, good-natured fellow, of ready wit and much broad humor. When he espied any large boys among the idle crowd around him, he would attract their attention by singing in a comical manner the following doggerel, —

'All you that have bad masters,
And cannot get your due,
Come, come, my brave boys,
And join our ship's crew.'

"A shout and a huzza would follow, and some would join in the ranks. My excitable feelings were aroused. I repaired to the rendezvous, signed the ship's papers, mounted a cockade, and was, in my own estimation, already more than half a sailor. Appeals continued to be made to the patriotism of every young man, to lend his aid, by his exertions on sea or land, to free his country from the common enemy. About the last of February the ship was ready to receive her crew, and was hauled off into the channel, that the sailors might have no opportunity to run away after they were got on board. Upward of three



John Barry

COMMODORE BARRY

hundred and thirty men were carried, dragged, and driven on board, of all kinds, ages, and descriptions, in all the various stages of intoxication, from that of sober tipsiness to beastly drunkenness, with an uproar and clamor that may be more easily imagined than described."

But, whatever the methods adopted to secure recruits for the navy, the men thus obtained did admirable service; and in no year did they win more glory than in 1778.

As usual the year's operations were opened by an exploit of one of the smaller cruisers. This was the United States sloop-of-war "Providence," a trig little vessel, mounting only twelve four-pounders, and carrying a crew of but fifty men. But she was in command of a daring seaman Capt. Rathburne, and she opened the year's hostilities with an exploit worthy of Paul Jones.

Off the south-eastern coast of Florida, in that archipelago or collection of groups of islands known collectively as the West Indies, lies the small island of New Providence. Here in 1778 was a small British colony. The well-protected harbor, and the convenient location of the island, made it a favorite place for the rendezvous of British naval vessels. Indeed, it bid fair to become, what Nassau is to-day, the chief British naval station on the American coast. In 1778 the little seaport had a population of about one thousand people.

With his little vessel, and her puny battery of four-pounders, Capt. Rathburne determined to undertake the capture of New Providence. Only the highest daring, approaching even recklessness, could have conceived such a plan. The harbor was defended by a fort of no mean power. There was always one British armed vessel, and often more, lying at anchor under the guns of the fort. Two hundred of the people of the town were able-bodied men, able to bear arms. How, then, were the Yankees, with their puny force, to hope for success? This query Rathburne answered, "By dash and daring."

It was about eleven o'clock on the night of the 27th of January, 1778, that the "Providence" cast anchor in a sheltered cove near the entrance to the harbor of New Providence. Twenty-five of her crew were put ashore, and being re-enforced by a few American prisoners kept upon the island, made a descent upon Fort Nassau from its landward side. The sentries dozing at their posts were easily overpowered, and the garrison was aroused from its peaceful slumbers by the cheers of the Yankee blue-jackets as they came tumbling in over the ramparts. A rocket sent up from the fort announced the victory to the "Providence," and she came in and cast anchor near the fort.

When morning broke, the Americans saw a large sixteen-gun ship lying at anchor in the harbor, together with five sail that looked suspiciously like captured American merchantmen. The proceedings of the night had been quietly carried on, and the crew of the armed vessel had no reason to suspect that the condition of affairs on shore had been changed in any way during the night. But at daybreak a boat carrying four men put off from the shore, and made for the armed ship; and at the same time a flag was flung out from the flag-staff of the fort, — not the familiar scarlet flag of Great Britain, but the almost unknown stars and stripes of the United States.

The sleepy sailors on the armed vessel rubbed their eyes; and while they were staring at the strange piece of bunting, there came a hail from a boat alongside, and an American officer clambered over the rail. He curtly told the captain of the privateer that the fort was in the hands of the Americans, and called upon him to surrender his vessel forthwith. Resistance was useless; for the heavy guns of Fort Nassau were trained upon the British ship, and could blow her out of the water. The visitor's arguments proved to be unanswerable; and the captain of the privateer surrendered his vessel, which was taken possession of by the Americans; while her crew of forty-five men was ordered into confinement in the dungeons of the fort which had so lately held captive Americans. Other boarding parties were then sent to the other vessels in the harbor, which proved to be American craft, captured by the British sloop-of-war "Grayton."

At sunrise the sleeping town showed signs of reviving life, and a party of the audacious Yankees marched down to the house of the governor. That functionary was found in bed, and in profound ignorance of the events of the night. The Americans broke the news to him none too gently, and demanded the keys of a disused fortress on the opposite side of the harbor from Fort Nassau. For a time the governor was inclined to demur; but the determined attitude of the Americans soon persuaded him that he was a prisoner, though in his own house, and he delivered the keys. Thereupon the Americans marched through the streets of the city, around the harbor's edge to the fort, spiked the guns, and carrying with them the powder and small-arms, marched back to Fort Nassau.

But by this time it was ten o'clock, and the whole town was aroused. The streets were crowded with people eagerly discussing the invasion. The timid ones were busily packing up their goods to fly into the country; while the braver ones were hunting for weapons, and organizing for an attack upon the fort held by the Americans. Fearing an outbreak, Capt. Rathburne sent out a flag of truce, making proclamation to all the inhabitants of New Providence, that the Americans would do no damage to the persons or property of the people of the island unless compelled so to do in self-defence. This pacified the more temperate of the inhabitants; but the hotheads, to the number of about two hundred, assembled before Fort Nassau, and threatened to attack it. But, when they summoned Rathburne to surrender, that officer leaped upon the parapet, and coolly told the assailants to come on.

"We can beat you back easily," said he. "And, by the Eternal, if you fire a gun at us, we'll turn the guns of the fort on your town, and lay it in ruins."

This bold defiance disconcerted the enemy; and, after some consultation among themselves, they dispersed.

About noon that day, the British sloop-of-war "Grayton" made her appearance, and stood boldly into the harbor where lay the "Providence." The United States colors were quickly hauled down from the fort flagstaff, and every means was taken to conceal the true state of affairs from the enemy. But the inhabitants along the waterside, by means of constant signalling and shouting, at last aroused the suspicion of her officers; and she hastily put about, and scudded for the open sea. The guns at Fort Nassau opened on her as she passed, and the aim of the Yankee gunners was accurate enough to make the splinters fly. The exact damage done her has, however, never been ascertained.

All that night the daring band of blue-jackets held the fort unmolested. But on the following morning the townspeople again plucked up courage, and to the number of five hundred marched to the fort, and placing several pieces of artillery in battery, summoned the garrison to surrender. The flag of truce that bore the summons carried also the threat, that, unless the Americans laid down their arms without resistance, the fort would be stormed, and all therein put to the sword without mercy.

For answer to the summons, the Americans nailed their colors to the mast, and swore that while a man of them lived the fort should not be surrendered. By this bold defiance they so awed the enemy that the day passed without the expected assault; and at night the besiegers returned to their homes, without having fired a shot.

All that night the Americans worked busily, transferring to the "Providence" all the ammunition and stores in the fort; and the next morning the prizes were manned, the guns of the fort spiked, and the adventurous Yankees set sail in triumph. For three days they had held possession of the island, though outnumbered tenfold by the inhabitants; they had captured large quantities of ammunition and naval stores; they had freed their captured countrymen; they had retaken from the British five captured American vessels, and in the whole affair they had lost not a single man. It was an achievement of which a force of triple the number might have been proud.

In February, 1778, the Delaware, along the water-front of Philadelphia, was the scene of some dashing work by American sailors, under the command of Capt. John Barry. This officer was in command of the "Effingham," one of the vessels which had been trapped in the Delaware by the unexpected occupation of Philadelphia by the British. The inactivity of the vessels, which had taken refuge at Whitehall, was a sore disappointment to Barry, who longed for the excitement and dangers of actual battle. With the British in force at Philadelphia, it was madness to think of taking the frigates down the stream. But Barry rightly thought that what could not be done with a heavy ship might be done with a few light boats.

Philadelphia was then crowded with British troops. The soldiers were well provided with money, and, finding themselves quartered in a city for the winter, led a life of continual gayety. The great accession to the population of the town made it necessary to draw upon the country far and near for provisions; and boats were continually plying upon the Delaware, carrying provisions to the city. To intercept some of these boats, and to give the merry British officers a taste of starvation, was Barry's plan.

Accordingly four boats were manned with well-armed crews, and with muffled oars set out on a dark night to patrol the river. Philadelphia was reached, and the expedition was almost past the city, when the sentries on one of the British men-of-war gave the alarm. A few scattering shots were fired from the shore; but the jackies bent to their oars, and the boats were soon lost to sight in the darkness. When day broke, Barry was far down the river.

Opposite the little post held by the American army, and called Fort Penn, Barry spied a large schooner, mounting ten guns, and flying the British flag. With her were four transport ships, loaded with forage for the enemy's forces. Though the sun had risen, and it was broad day, Barry succeeded in running his boats alongside the schooner; and before the British suspected the presence of any enemy, the blue-jackets were clambering over the rail, cutlass and pistol in hand. There was no resistance. The astonished Englishmen threw down their arms, and rushed below. The victorious Americans battened down the hatches, ordered the four transports to surrender, on pain of being fired into, and triumphantly carried all five prizes to the piers of Fort Penn. There the hatches were removed; and, the Yankee sailors being drawn up in line, Barry ordered the prisoners to come on deck. When all appeared, it was found that the Yankees had bagged one major, two captains, three lieutenants, ten soldiers, and about a hundred sailors and marines, — a very respectable haul for a party of not more than thirty American sailors.

The next day a British frigate and sloop-of-war appeared down the bay. They were under full sail, and were apparently making for Fort Penn, with the probable intention of recapturing Barry's prizes. Fearing that he might be robbed of the fruits of his victory, Barry put the four transports in charge of Capt. Middleton, with instructions to fire them should the enemy attempt to cut them out. In the mean time, he took the ten-gun schooner, and made for the Christiana River, in the hopes of taking her into shallow waters, whither the heavier British vessels could not follow. But, unluckily for his plans, the wind favored the frigate; and she gained upon him so rapidly, that only by the greatest expedition could he run his craft ashore and escape. Two of the guns were pointed down the main hatch, and a few rounds of round-shot were fired through the schooner's bottom. She sunk quickly; and the Americans pushed off from her side, just as the British frigate swung into position, and let fly her broadside at her escaping foes.

The schooner being thus disposed of, the British turned their attention to the four captured transports at Fort Penn. Capt. Middleton and Capt. McLane, who commanded the American militia on shore, had taken advantage of the delay to build a battery of bales of hay near the piers. The British sloop-of-war opened the attack, but the sharp-shooters in the battery and on the transports gave her so warm a reception that she retired. She soon returned to the attack, but was checked by the American fire, and might have been beaten off, had not Middleton received a mortal wound while standing on the battery and cheering on his men. Dismayed by the fall of their leader, the Americans set fire to the transport and fled to the woods, leaving the British masters of the field.

Barry's conduct in this enterprise won for him the admiration of friend and foe alike. Sir William Howe, then commander-in-chief of the British forces in America, offered the daring American twenty thousand guineas and the command of a British frigate, if he would desert the service of the United States.

"Not the value and command of the whole British fleet," wrote Barry in reply, "can seduce me from the cause of my country."

After this adventure, Barry and his followers made their way through the woods back to Whitehall, where his ship the "Effingham" was lying at anchor. Here he passed the winter in inactivity. At Whitehall, and near that place, were nearly a dozen armed ships, frigates, sloops, and privateers. All had fled thither for safety when the British took possession of Philadelphia, and now found themselves caught in a trap. To run the blockade of British batteries and men-of-war at Philadelphia, was impossible; and there was nothing to do but wait until the enemy should evacuate the city.

But the British were in no haste to leave Philadelphia; and when they did get ready to leave, they determined to destroy the American flotilla before departing. Accordingly on the 4th of May, 1778, the water-front of the Quaker City was alive with soldiers and citizens watching the embarkation of the troops ordered against the American forces at Whitehall. On the placid bosom of the Delaware floated the schooners "Viper" and "Pembroke," the galleys "Hussar," "Cornwallis," "Ferret," and "Philadelphia," four gunboats, and eighteen flat-boats. Between this fleet and the shore, boats were busily plying, carrying off the soldiers of the light infantry, seven hundred of whom were detailed for the expedition. It was a holiday affair. The British expected little fighting; and with flags flying, and bands playing, the vessels started up stream, the cheers of the soldiers on board mingling with those on the shore.

Bristol, the landing-place chosen, was soon reached; and the troops disembarked without meeting with any opposition. Forming in solid column, the soldiers took up the march for Whitehall; but, when within five miles of that place, a ruddy glare in the sky told that the Americans had been warned of their coming, and had set the torch to the shipping. When the head of the British column entered Whitehall, the two new American frigates "Washington" and "Effingham" were wrapped in flames. Both were new vessels, and neither had yet taken on board her battery. Several other vessels were lying at the wharves; and to these the British set the torch, and continued their march, leaving the roaring flames behind them. A little farther up the Delaware, at the point known as Crosswise Creek, the large privateer "Sturdy Beggar" was found, together with several smaller craft. The crews had all fled, and the deserted vessels met the fate of the other craft taken by the invaders. Then the British turned their steps homeward, and reached Philadelphia, after having burned almost a score of vessels, and fired not a single shot.

On the high seas during 1778 occurred several notable naval engagements. Of the more important of these we have spoken in our accounts of the exploits of Tucker, Biddle, and Paul Jones. The less important ones must be dismissed with a hasty word.

It may be said, that, in general, the naval actions of 1778 went against the Americans. In February of that year the "Alfred" was captured by a British frigate, and the "Raleigh" narrowly escaped. In March, the new frigate "Virginia," while beating out of Chesapeake Bay on her very first cruise, ran aground, and was captured by the enemy. In September, the United States frigate "Raleigh," when a few days out from Boston, fell in with two British vessels, — one a frigate, and the other a ship-of-the-line. Capt. Barry, whose daring exploits on the Delaware we have chronicled, was in command of the "Raleigh," and gallantly gave battle to the frigate, which was in the lead. Between these two vessels the conflict raged with great fury for upwards of two hours, when the fore-topmast and mizzen top-gallant-mast of the American having been shot away Barry attempted to close the conflict by boarding. The enemy kept at a safe distance, however; and his consort soon coming up, the Americans determined to seek safety in flight. The enemy pursued, keeping up a rapid fire; and the running conflict continued until midnight. Finally Barry set fire to his ship, and with the greater part of his crew escaped to the nearest land, an island near the mouth of the Penobscot. The British immediately boarded the abandoned ship, extinguished the flames, and carried their prize away in triumph.

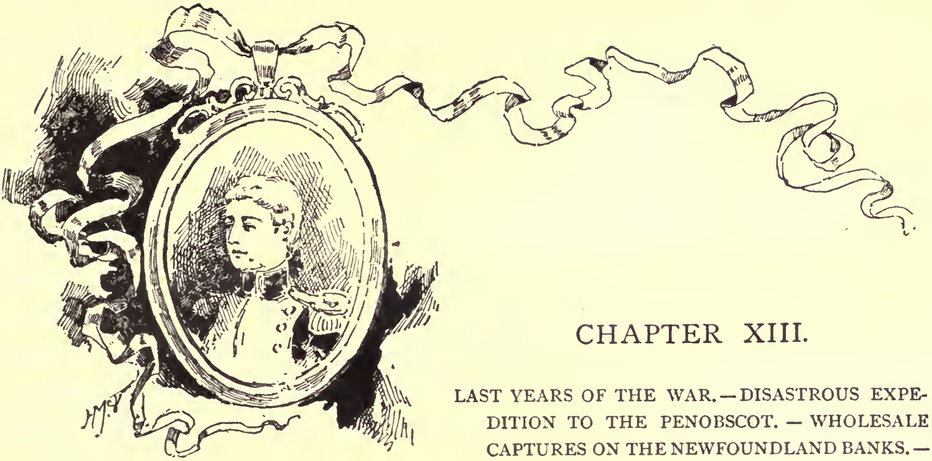
To offset these reverses to the American arms, there were one or two victories for the Americans, aside from those won by Paul Jones, and the exploits of privateers and colonial armed vessels, which we shall group together in a later chapter. The first of these victories was won by an army officer, who was later transferred to the navy, and won great honor in the naval service.

In an inlet of Narragansett Bay, near Newport, the British had anchored a powerful floating battery, made of the dismasted hulk of the schooner "Pigot," on which were mounted twelve eight-pounders and ten swivel guns. It was about the time that the fleet sent by France to aid the United States was expected to arrive; and the British had built and placed in position this battery, to close the channel leading to Newport. Major Silas Talbot, an army officer who had won renown earlier in the war by a daring but unsuccessful attempt to destroy two British frigates in the Hudson River, by means of fire-ships, obtained permission to lead an expedition for the capture of the "Pigot." Accordingly, with sixty picked men, he set sail from Providence in the sloop "Hawk," mounting three three-pounders. When within a few miles of the "Pigot," he landed, and, borrowing a horse, rode down and reconnoitred the battery. When the night set in, he returned to the sloop, and at once weighed anchor and made for the enemy. As the "Hawk" drew near the "Pigot," the British sentinels challenged her, and receiving no reply, fired a volley of musketry, which injured no one. On came the "Hawk," under a full spread of canvas. A kedge-anchor had been lashed to the end of her bowsprit; and, before the British could reload, this crashed through the boarding-nettings of the "Pigot," and caught in the shrouds. The two vessels being fast, the Americans, with ringing cheers, ran along the bowsprit, and dropped on the deck of the "Pigot." The surprise was complete. The British captain rushed on deck, clad only in his shirt and drawers, and strove manfully to rally his crew. But as the Americans, cutlass and pistol in hand, swarmed over the taffrail, the surprised British lost heart, and fled to the hold, until at last the captain found himself alone upon the deck. Nothing was left for him but to surrender with the best grace possible; and soon Talbot was on his way back to Providence, with his prize and a shipful of prisoners.

But perhaps the greatest naval event of 1778 in American waters was the arrival of the fleet sent by France to co-operate with the American forces. Not that any thing of importance was ever accomplished by this naval force: the French officers seemed to find their greatest satisfaction in manœuvring, reconnoitring, and performing in the most exact and admirable manner all the preliminaries to a battle. Having done this, they would sail away, never firing a gun. The Yankees were prone to disregard the nice points of naval tactics. Their plan was to lay their ships alongside the enemy, and pound away until one side or the other had to yield or sink. But the French allies were strong on tactics, and somewhat weak in dash; and, as a result, there is not one actual combat in which they figured to be recorded.

It was a noble fleet that France sent to the aid of the struggling Americans, — twelve ships-of-the-line and three frigates. What dashing Paul Jones would have done, had he ever enjoyed the command of such a fleet, almost passes imagination. Certain it is that he would have wasted little time in formal evolutions. But the fleet was commanded by Count d'Estaing, a French naval officer of honorable reputation. What he accomplished during his first year's cruise in American waters, can be told in a few words. His intention was to trap Lord Howe's fleet in the Delaware, but he arrived too late. He then followed the British to New York, but was baffled there by the fact that his vessels were too heavy to cross the bar. Thence he went to Newport, where the appearance of his fleet frightened the British into burning four of their frigates, and sinking two sloops-of-war. Lord Howe, hearing of this, plucked up courage, and, gathering together all his ships, sailed from New York to Newport, to give battle to the French. The two fleets were about equally matched. On the 10th of August the enemies met in the open sea, off Newport. For two days they kept out of range of each other, manœuvring for the weather-gage; that is, the French fleet, being to windward of the British, strove to keep that position, while the British endeavored to take it from them. The third day a gale arose; and when it subsided the ships were so crippled, that, after exchanging a few harmless broadsides at long range, they withdrew, and the naval battle was ended.

Such was the record of D’Estaing’s magnificent fleet during 1778. Certainly the Americans had little to learn from the representatives of the power that had for years contended with England for the mastery of the seas.



CHAPTER XIII.

LAST YEARS OF THE WAR. — DISASTROUS EXPEDITION TO THE PENOBSCOT. — WHOLESALE CAPTURES ON THE NEWFOUNDLAND BANKS. — FRENCH SHIPS IN AMERICAN WATERS. — TAKING OF CHARLESTON. — THE "TRUMBULL'S" VICTORY AND DEFEAT. — CAPT. BARRY AND THE "ALLIANCE." — CLOSE OF THE WAR.

THE year 1779 is chiefly known in American naval history as the year in which Paul Jones did his most brilliant service in the "Bon Homme Richard." The glory won by the Americans was chiefly gained in European waters. Along the coast of the United States, there were some dashing actions; but the advantage generally remained with the British.

Perhaps the most notable naval event of this year, aside from the battle between the "Bon Homme Richard" and the "Serapis," was the expedition sent by the State of Massachusetts against the British post at Castine, on the banks of the Penobscot River. At this unimportant settlement in the wilds of Maine, the British had established a military post, with a garrison of about a thousand men, together with four armed vessels. Here they might have been permitted to remain in peace, so far as any danger from their presence was to be apprehended by the people of New England. But the sturdy citizens of Massachusetts had boasted, that, since the evacuation of Boston, no British soldier had dared to set foot on Massachusetts soil; and the news of this invasion caused the people of Boston to rise as one man, and demand that the invaders should be expelled.

Accordingly a joint naval and military expedition was fitted out under authority granted by the Legislature of the State. Congress detailed he United States frigate "Warren," and the sloops-of-war "Diligence" and "Providence," to head the expedition. The Massachusetts cruisers "Hazard," "Active," and "Tyrannicide" represented the regular naval forces of the Bay State; and twelve armed vessels belonging to private citizens were hired, to complete the armada. The excitement among seafaring men ran high. Every man who had ever swung a cutlass or sighted a gun was anxious to accompany the expedition. Ordinarily it was difficult to ship enough men for the navy; now it was impossible to take all the applicants. It is even recorded that the list of common sailors on the armed ship "Vengeance" included thirty masters of merchantmen, who waived all considerations of rank, in order that they might join the expedition.

To co-operate with the fleet, a military force was thought necessary; and accordingly orders were issued for fifteen hundred of the militia of the district of Maine to assemble at Townsend. Brig.-Gen. Sullivan was appointed to the command of the land forces, while Capt. Saltonstall of the "Warren" was made commodore of the fleet.

Punctually on the day appointed the white sails of the American ships were seen by the militiamen at the appointed rendezvous. But when the ships dropped anchor, and the commodore went ashore to consult with the officers of the land forces, he found that but nine hundred of the militiamen had responded to the call. Nevertheless, it was determined, after a brief consultation, to proceed with the expedition, despite the sadly diminished strength of the militia battalions.

On the 23d of July, the fleet set sail from the harbor of Townsend. It was an extraordinary and impressive spectacle. The shores of the harbor were covered with unbroken forests, save at the lower end where a little hamlet of scarce five hundred people gave a touch of civilization to the wild scene. But the water looked as though the commerce of a dozen cities had centred there. On the placid bosom of the little bay floated forty-four vessels. The tread of men about the capstans, the hoarse shouts of command, the monotonous songs of the sailors, the creaking of cordage, and the flapping of sails gave an unwonted turbulence to the air which seldom bore a sound other than the voices of birds or the occasional blows of a woodman's axe. Nineteen vessels-of-war and twenty-five transports imparted to the harbor of Townsend an air of life and bustle to which it had been a stranger, and which it has never since experienced.

The weather was clear, and the wind fair; so that two days after leaving Townsend the fleet appeared before the works of the enemy. Standing on the quarter-deck of the "Warren," the commodore and the general eagerly scanned the enemy's defences, and after a careful examination were forced to admit that the works they had to carry were no mean specimens of the art of fortification. The river's banks rose almost perpendicularly from the water-side, and on their crest were perched the enemy's batteries, while on a high and precipitous hill was built a fort or citadel. In the river were anchored the four armed vessels.

Two days were spent by the Americans in reconnoitring the enemy's works; and on the 28th of July the work of disembarking the troops began, under a heavy fire from the enemy's batteries. The "Warren" and one of the sloops-of-war endeavored to cover the landing party by attacking the batteries; and a spirited cannonade followed, in which the American flag-ship suffered seriously. At last all the militia, together with three hundred marines, were put on shore, and at once assaulted the batteries. They were opposed by about an equal number of well-drilled Scotch regulars, and the battle raged fiercely; the men-of-war in the river covering the advance of the troops by a spirited and well-directed fire. More than once the curving line of men rushed against the fiery front of the British ramparts, and recoiled, shattered by the deadly volleys of the Scotch veterans. Here and there, in the grass and weeds, the forms of dead men began to be seen. The pitiable spectacle of the wounded, painfully crawling to the rear, began to make the pulse of the bravest beat quicker. But the men of Massachusetts, responsive to the voices of their officers, re-formed their shattered ranks, and charged again and again, until at last, with a mighty cheer, they swept over the ramparts, driving the British out. Many of the enemy surrendered; more fled for shelter to the fort on the hill. The smoke and din of battle died away. There came a brief respite in the bloody strife. The Americans had won the first trick in the bloody game of war.

Only a short pause followed; then the Americans moved upon the fort. But here they found themselves overmatched. Against the towering bastions of the fortress they might hurl themselves in vain. The enemy, safe behind its heavy parapets, could mow down their advancing ranks with a cool and deliberate fire. The assailants had already sacrificed more than a hundred men. Was it wise now to order an assault that might lead to the loss of twice that number?

The hotheads cried out for the immediate storming of the fort; but cooler counsels prevailed, and a siege was decided upon. Trenches were dug, the guns in the outlying batteries were turned upon the fort, and the New Englanders sat down to wait until the enemy should be starved out, or until re-enforcements might be brought from Boston.

So for three weeks the combatants rested on their arms, glaring at each other over the tops of their breastworks, and now and then exchanging a shot or a casual volley, but doing little in the way of actual hostilities. Provisions were failing the British, and they began to feel that they were in a trap from which they could only emerge through a surrender, when suddenly the situation was changed, and the fortunes of war went against the Americans.

One morning the "Tyrannicide," which was stationed on the lookout down the bay, was seen beating up the river, under a full press of sail. Signals flying at her fore indicated that she had important news to tell. Her anchor had not touched the bottom before a boat pushed off from her side, and made straight for the commodore's flagship. Reaching the "Warren," a lieutenant clambered over the side, and saluted Commodore Saltonstall on the quarter-deck.

"Capt. Cathcart's compliments, sir," said he, "and five British men-of-war are just entering the bay. The first one appears to be the 'Rainbow,' forty-four."

Here was news indeed. Though superior in numbers, the Americans were far inferior in weight of metal. After a hasty consultation, it was determined to abandon the siege, and retreat with troops and vessels to the shallow waters of the Penobscot, whither the heavy men-of-war of the enemy would be unable to follow them. Accordingly the troops were hastily re-embarked, and a hurried flight began, which was greatly accelerated by the appearance of the enemy coming up the river.

The chase did not continue long before it became evident the enemy would overhaul the retreating ships. Soon he came within range, and opened fire with his bow-guns, in the hopes of crippling one of the American ships. The fire was returned; and for several hours the wooded shores of the Penobscot echoed and re-echoed the thunders of the cannonade, as the warring fleets swept up the river.

At last the conviction forced itself on the minds of the Americans, that for them there was no escape. The British were steadily gaining upon them, and there was no sign of the shoal water in which they had hoped to find a refuge. It would seem that a bold dash might have carried the day for the Americans, so greatly did they outnumber their enemies. But this plan does not appear to have suggested itself to Capt. Saltonstall, who had concentrated all his efforts upon the attempt to escape. When escape proved to be hopeless, his only thought was to destroy his vessels. Accordingly his flagship, the "Warren," was run ashore, and set on fire. The action of the commodore was imitated by the rest of the officers, and soon the banks of the river were lined with blazing vessels. The "Hunter," the "Hampden," and one transport fell into the hands of the British. The rest of the forty-nine vessels — men-of-war, privateers, and transports — that made up the fleet were destroyed by flames.

It must indeed have been a stirring spectacle. The shores of the Penobscot River were then a trackless wilderness; the placid bosom of the river itself had seldom been traversed by a heavier craft than the slender birch-bark canoe of the red man; yet here was this river crowded with shipping, the dark forests along its banks lighted up by the glare of twoscore angry fires. Through the thickets and underbrush parties of excited men broke their way, seeking for a common point of meeting, out of range of the cannon of the enemy. The British, meantime, were striving to extinguish the flames, but with little success; and before the day ended, little remained of the great Massachusetts flotilla, except the three captured ships and sundry heaps of smouldering timber.

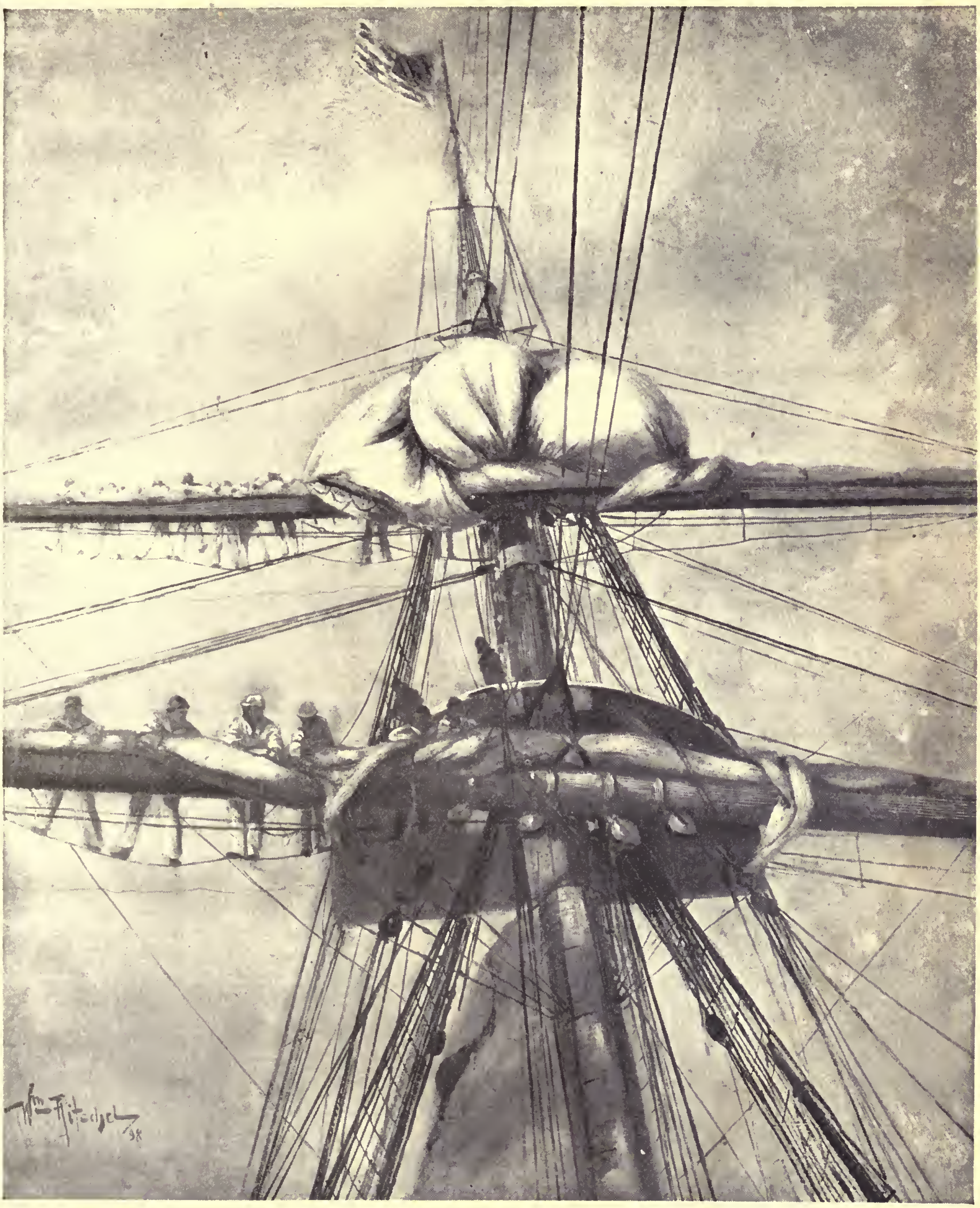
The hardships of the soldiers and marines who had escaped capture, only to find themselves lost in the desolate forest, were of the severest kind. Separating into parties they plodded along, half-starved, with torn and rain-soaked clothing, until finally, footsore and almost perishing, they reached the border settlements, and were aided on their way to Boston. The disaster was complete, and for months its depressing effect upon American naval enterprise was observable.

In observing the course of naval events in 1779, it is noticeable that the most effective work was done by the cruisers sent out by the individual States, or by privateers. The United States navy, proper, did little except what was done in European waters by Paul Jones. Indeed, along the American coast, a few cruises in which no actions of moment occurred, although several prizes were taken, make up the record of naval activity for the year.

The first of these cruises was that made in April by the ships "Warren," "Queen of France," and "Ranger." They sailed from Boston, and were out but a few days when they captured a British privateer of fourteen guns. From one of the sailors on this craft it was learned that a large fleet of transports and storeships had just sailed from New York, bound for Georgia. Crowding on all sail, the Americans set out in pursuit, and off Cape Henry overhauled the chase. Two fleets were sighted, one to windward numbering nine sail, and one to leeward made up of ten sail. The pursuers chose the fleet to windward for their prey, and by sharp work succeeded in capturing seven vessels in eight hours. Two of the ships were armed cruisers of twenty-nine and sixteen guns respectively, and all the prizes were heavy laden with provisions, ammunition, and cavalry accoutrements. All were safely taken into port.

In June, another fleet of United States vessels left Boston in search of British game. The "Queen of France" and the "Ranger" were again employed; but the "Warren" remained in port, fitting out for her ill-fated expedition to the Penobscot. Her place was taken by the "Providence," thirty-two. For a time the cruisers fell in with nothing of importance. But one day about the middle of July, as the three vessels lay hove to off the banks of Newfoundland, in the region of perpetual fog, the dull booming of a signal gun was heard. Nothing was to be seen on any side. From the quarter-deck, and from the cross-trees alike, the eager eyes of the officers and seamen strove in vain to penetrate the dense curtain of gray fog that shut them in. But again the signal gun sounded, then another; and tone and direction alike told that the two reports had not come from the same cannon. Then a bell was heard telling the hour, — another, still another; then a whole chorus of bells. Clearly a large fleet was shut in the fog.

About eleven o'clock in the morning the fog lifted, and to their


Wm Mitchell
'98

SHORTENING SAIL ON THE "LANCASTER"—THE OLDEST
U. S. CRUISER IN COMMISSION

intense surprise the crew of the "Queen of France" found themselves close alongside of a large merchant-ship. As the fog cleared away more completely, ships appeared on every side; and the astonished Yankees found themselves in the midst of a fleet of about one hundred and fifty sail under convoy of a British ship-of-the-line, and several frigates and sloops-of-war. Luckily the United States vessels had no colors flying, and nothing about them to betray their nationality: so Capt. Rathburn of the "Queen" determined to try a little masquerading.

Bearing down upon the nearest merchantman, he hailed her; and the following conversation ensued, —

"What fleet is this?"

"British merchantmen from Jamaica, bound for London. Who are you?"

"His Majesty's ship 'Arethusa,'" answered Rathburn boldly, "from Halifax on cruise. Have you seen any Yankee privateers?"

"Ay, ay, sir," was the response. "Several have been driven out of the fleet."

"Come aboard the 'Arethusa,' then. I wish to consult with you."

Soon a boat put off from the side of the merchantman, and a jolly British sea-captain confidently clambered to the deck of the "Queen." Great was his astonishment to be told that he was a prisoner, and to see his boat's crew brought aboard, and their places taken by American jackies. Back went the boat to the British ship; and soon the Americans were in control of the craft, without in the least alarming the other vessels, that lay almost within hail. The "Queen" then made up to another ship, and captured her in the same manner.

But at this juncture Commodore Whipple, in the "Providence," hailed the "Queen," and directed Rathburn to edge out of the fleet before the British men-of-war should discover his true character. Rathburn protested vigorously, pointing out the two vessels he had captured, and urging Whipple to follow his example, and capture as many vessels as he could in the same manner. Finally Whipple overcame his fears, and adopted Rathburn's methods, with such success that shortly after nightfall the Americans left the fleet, taking with them eleven rich prizes. Eight of these they succeeded in taking safe to Boston, where they were sold for more than a million dollars.

In May, 1779, occurred two unimportant engagements, — one off Sandy Hook, in which the United States sloop "Providence," ten guns, captured the British sloop "Diligent," after a brief but spirited engagement; the second action occurred off St. Kitt's, where the United States brig "Retaliation" successfully resisted a vigorous attack by a British cutter and a brig. The record of the regular navy for the year closed with the cruise of the United States frigates "Deane" and "Boston," that set sail from the Delaware late in the summer. They kept the seas for nearly three months, but made only a few bloodless captures.

The next year opened with a great disaster to the American cause. The Count d'Estaing, after aimlessly wandering up and down the coast of the United States with the fleet ostensibly sent to aid the Americans, suddenly took himself and his fleet off to the West Indies. Sir Henry Clinton soon learned of the departure of the French, and gathered an expedition for the capture of Charleston. On the 10th of February, Clinton with five thousand troops, and a British fleet under Admiral Arbuthnot, appeared off Edisto Inlet, about thirty miles from Charleston, and began leisurely preparations for an attack upon the city. Had he pushed ahead and made his assault at once, he would have met but little resistance; but his delay of over a month gave the people of Charleston time to prepare for a spirited resistance.

The approach of the British fleet penned up in Charleston harbor several United States men-of-war and armed vessels, among them the "Providence," "Queen of France," "Boston," "Ranger," "Gen. Moultrie," and "Notre Dame." These vessels took an active part in the defence of the harbor against Arbuthnot's fleet, but were beaten back. The "Queen," the "Gen. Moultrie," and the "Notre Dame" were then sunk in the channel to obstruct the progress of the enemy; their guns being taken ashore, and mounted in the batteries on the sea-wall. Then followed days of terror for Charleston. The land forces of the enemy turned siege guns on the unhappy city, and a constant bombardment was kept up from the hostile fleet. Fort Sumter, the batteries along the water front, and the ships remaining to the Americans answered boldly. But the defence was hopeless. The city was hemmed in by an iron cordon. The hot-shot of the enemy's batteries were falling in the streets, and flames were breaking out in all parts of the town. While the defence lasted, the men-of-war took an active part in it; and, indeed, the sailors were the last to consent to a surrender. So noticeable was the activity of the frigate "Boston" in particular, that, when it became evident that the Americans could hold out but a little longer, Admiral Arbuthnot sent her commander a special order to surrender.

"I do not think much of striking my flag to your present force," responded bluff Samuel Tucker, who commanded the "Boston;" "for I have struck more of your flags than are now flying in this harbor."

But, despite this bold defiance, the inevitable capitulation soon followed. Charleston fell into the hands of the British; and with the city went the three men-of-war, "Providence," "Boston," and "Ranger."

It will be noticed that this disaster was the direct result of the disappearance of Count d'Estaing and the French fleet. To the student of history who calmly considers the record of our French naval allies in the Revolution, there appears good reason to believe that their presence did us more harm than good. Under De Grasse, the French fleet did good service in co-operation with the allied armies in the Yorktown campaign; but, with this single exception, no instance can be cited of any material aid rendered by it to the American cause. The United States navy, indeed, suffered on account of the French alliance; for despite the loss of many vessels in 1779 and 1780, Congress refused to increase the navy in any way, trusting to France to care for America's interests on the seas. The result of this policy was a notable falling-off in the number and spirit of naval actions.

The ship "Trumbull," twenty-eight, one of the exploits of which we have already chronicled, saw a good deal of active service during the last two years of the war; and though she finally fell into the hands of the enemy, it was only because the odds against her were not to be overcome by the most spirited resistance. It was on the 2d of June, 1780, that the "Trumbull," while cruising far out in the Atlantic Ocean in the path of British merchantmen bound for the West Indies, sighted a strange sail hull down to windward. The "Trumbull" was then in command of Capt. James Nicholson, an able and plucky officer. Immediately on hearing the report of the lookout, Nicholson ordered all the canvas furled, in order that the stranger might not catch sight of the "Trumbull." It is, of course, obvious that a ship under bare poles is a far less conspicuous object upon the ocean, than is the same ship with her yards hung with vast clouds of snowy canvas. But apparently the stranger sighted the "Trumbull," and had no desire to avoid her; for she bore down upon the American ship rapidly, and showed no desire to avoid a meeting. Seeing this, Nicholson made sail, and was soon close to the stranger. As the two ships drew closer together, the stranger showed her character by firing three guns, and hoisting the British colors.

Seeing an action impending, Nicholson called his crew aft and harangued them, as was the custom before going into battle. It was not a promising outlook for the American ship. She was but recently out of port, and was manned largely by "green hands." The privateers had so thoroughly stripped the decks of able seamen, that the "Trumbull" had to ship men who knew not one rope from another; and it is even said, that, when the drums beat to quarters the day of the battle, many of the sailors were suffering from the landsman's terror, seasickness. But what they lacked in experience, they made up in enthusiasm.

With the British flag at the peak, the "Trumbull" bore down upon the enemy. But the stranger was not to be deceived by so hackneyed a device. He set a private signal, and, as the Americans did not answer it, let fly a broadside at one hundred yards distance. The "Trumbull" responded with spirit, and the stars and stripes went fluttering to the peak in the place of the British ensign. Then the thunder of battle continued undiminished for two hours and a half. The wind was light, and the vessels rode on an even keel nearly abreast of each other, and but fifty yards apart. At times their yard-arms interlocked; and still the heavy broadsides rang out, and the flying shot crashed through beam and stanchion, striking down the men at their guns, and covering the decks with blood. Twice the flying wads of heavy paper from the enemy's guns set the "Trumbull" afire, and once the British ship was endangered by the same cause.

At last the fire of the enemy slackened, and the Americans, seeing victory within their grasp, redoubled their efforts; but at this critical moment one of the gun-deck officers came running to Nicholson, with the report that the main-mast had been repeatedly hit by the enemy's shot, and was now tottering. If the main-mast went by the board, the fate of the "Trumbull" was sealed. Crowding sail on the other masts, the "Trumbull" shot ahead, and was soon out of the line of fire, the enemy being apparently too much occupied with his own injuries to molest her. Hardly had she gone the distance of a musket-shot, when her main and mizzen top-masts went by the board; and before the nimble jackies could cut away the wreck the other spars followed, until nothing was left but the fore-mast. When the crashing and confusion was over, the "Trumbull" lay a pitiable wreck, and an easy prey for her foe.

But the Briton showed a strange disinclination to take advantage of the opportunity. The Yankee sailors worked like mad in cutting away the wreck; then rushed to their guns, ready to make a desperate, if hopeless, resistance in case of an attack. But the attack never came. Without even a parting shot the enemy went off on her course; and before she was out of sight her main top-mast was seen to fall, showing that she too had suffered in the action.

Not for months after did the crew of the "Trumbull" learn the name of the vessel they had fought. At last it was learned that she was a heavy letter-of-marque, the "Watt." Her exact weight of metal has never been ascertained, though Capt. Nicholson estimated it at thirty four or thirty-six guns. The "Trumbull" mounted thirty-six guns. The captain of the "Watt" reported his loss to have been ninety-two in killed and wounded; the loss of the "Trumbull" amounted to thirty-nine, though two of her lieutenants were among the slain. This action, in severity, ranked next to the famous naval duel between the "Bon Homme Richard" and the "Serapis."

As the "Trumbull" fought her last battle under the flag of the United States a year later, and as our consideration of the events of the Revolution is drawing to a close, we may abandon chronological order, and follow Nicholson and his good ship to the end of their career. In August, 1781, the "Trumbull" left the Delaware, convoying twenty-eight merchantmen, and accompanied by one privateer. Again her crew was weakened by the scarcity of good seamen, and this time Nicholson had adopted the dangerous and indefensible expedient of shipping British prisoners-of-war. There were fifty of these renegades in the crew; and naturally, as they were ready to traitorously abandon their own country, they were equally ready for treachery to the flag under which they sailed. There were many instances during the Revolution of United States ships being manned largely by British prisoners. Usually the crews thus obtained were treacherous and insubordinate. Even if it had been otherwise, the custom was a bad one, and repugnant to honorable men.

So with a crew half-trained and half-disaffected, the "Trumbull" set out to convoy a fleet of merchantmen through waters frequented by British men-of-war. Hardly had she passed the capes when three British cruisers were made out astern. One, a frigate, gave chase. Night fell, and in the darkness the "Trumbull" might have escaped with her charges, but that a violent squall struck her, carrying away her fore-top-mast and main-top-gallant-mast. Her convoy scattered in all directions, and by ten o'clock the British frigate had caught up with the disabled American.

The night was still squally, with bursts of rain and fitful flashes of lightning, which lighted up the decks of the American ship as she tossed on the waves. The storm had left her in a sadly disabled condition. The shattered top hamper had fallen forward, cumbering up the forecastle, and so tangling the bow tackle that the jibs were useless. The foresail was jammed and torn by the fore-topsail-yard. There was half a day's work necessary to clear away the wreck, and the steadily advancing lights of the British ship told that not half an hour could be had to prepare for the battle.

There was no hope that resistance could be successful, but the brave hearts of Nicholson and his officers recoiled from the thought of tamely striking the flag without firing a shot. So the drummers were ordered to beat the crew to quarters; and soon, by the light of the battle-lanterns, the captains of the guns were calling over the names of the sailors. The roll-call had proceeded but a short time when it became evident that most of the British renegades were absent from their stations. The officers and marines went below to find them. While they were absent, others of the renegades, together with about half of the crew whom they had tainted with their mutinous plottings, put out the battle-lanterns, and hid themselves deep in the hold. At this moment the enemy came up, and opened fire.

Determined to make some defence, Nicholson sent the few faithful jackies to the guns, and the officers worked side by side with the sailors. The few guns that were manned were served splendidly, and the unequal contest was maintained for over an hour, when a second British man-of-war came up, and the "Trumbull" was forced to strike. At no time had more than forty of her people been at the guns. To this fact is due the small loss of life; for, though the ship was terribly cut up, only five of her crew were killed, and eleven wounded.

The frigate that had engaged the "Trumbull" was the "Iris," formerly the "Hancock" captured from the Americans by the "Rainbow." She was one of the largest of the American frigates, while the "Trumbull" was one of the smallest. The contest, therefore, would have been unequal, even had not so many elements of weakness contributed to the "Trumbull's" discomfiture.

Taking up again the thread of our narrative of the events of 1780, we find that for three months after the action between the "Trumbull" and the "Watt" there were no naval actions of moment. Not until October did a United States vessel again knock the tompions from her guns, and give battle to an enemy. During that month the cruiser "Saratoga" fell in with a hostile armed ship and two brigs. The action that followed was brief, and the triumph of the Americans complete. One broadside was fired by the "Saratoga;" then, closing with her foe, she threw fifty men aboard, who drove the enemy below. But the gallant Americans were not destined to profit by the results of their victory; for, as they were making for the Delaware, the British seventy-four "Intrepid" intercepted them, and recaptured all the prizes. The "Saratoga" escaped capture, only to meet a sadder fate; for, as she never returned to port, it is supposed that she foundered with all on board.

The autumn and winter passed without any further exploits on the part of the navy. The number of the regular cruisers had been sadly diminished, and several were kept blockaded in home ports. Along the American coast the British cruisers fairly swarmed; and the only chance for the few Yankee ships afloat was to keep at sea as much as possible, and try to intercept the enemy's privateers, transports, and merchantmen, on their way across the ocean.

One United States frigate, and that one a favorite ship in the navy, was ordered abroad in February, 1781, and on her voyage did some brave work for her country. This vessel was the "Alliance," once under the treacherous command of the eccentric Landais, and since his dismissal commanded by Capt. John Barry, of whose plucky fight in the "Raleigh" we have already spoken. The "Alliance" sailed from Boston, carrying an army officer on a mission to France. She made the voyage without sighting an enemy. Having landed her passenger, she set out from l'Orient, with the "Lafayette," forty, in company. The two cruised together for three days, capturing two heavy privateers. They then parted, and the "Alliance" continued her cruise alone.

On the 28th of May the lookout reported two sail in sight; and soon the strangers altered their course, and bore down directly upon the American frigate. It was late in the afternoon, and darkness set in before the strangers were near enough for their character to be made out. At dawn all eyes on the "Alliance" scanned the ocean in search of the two vessels, which were then easily seen to be a sloop-of-war and a brig. Over each floated the British colors.

A dead calm rested upon the waters. Canvas was spread on all the ships, but flapped idly against the yards. Not the slightest motion could be discerned, and none of the ships had steerage-way. The enemy had evidently determined to fight; for before the sun rose red and glowing from beneath the horizon, sweeps were seen protruding from the sides of the two ships, and they gradually began to lessen the distance between them and the American frigate. Capt. Barry had no desire to avoid the conflict; though in a calm, the lighter vessels, being manageable with sweeps, had greatly the advantage of the "Alliance," which could only lie like a log upon the water. Six hours of weary work with the sweeps passed before the enemy came near enough to hail. The usual questions and answers were followed by the roar of the cannon, and the action began. The prospects for the "Alliance" were dreary indeed; for the enemy took positions on the quarters of the helpless ship, and were able to pour in broadsides, while she could respond only with a few of her aftermost guns. But, though the case looked hopeless, the Americans fought on, hoping that a wind might spring up, that would give the good ship "Alliance" at least a fighting chance.

As Barry strode the quarter-deck, watching the progress of the fight, encouraging his men, and looking out anxiously for indications of a wind, a grape-shot struck him in the shoulder, and felled him to the deck. He was on his feet again in an instant; and though weakened by the pain, and the rapid flow of blood from the wound, he remained on deck. At last, however, he became too weak to stand, and was carried below. At this moment a flying shot carried away the American colors; and, as the fire of the "Alliance" was stopped a moment for the loading of the guns, the enemy thought the victory won, and cheered lustily. But their triumph was of short duration; for a new ensign soon took the place of the vanished one, and the fire of the "Alliance" commenced again.

The "Alliance" was now getting into sore straits. The fire of the enemy had told heavily upon her, and her fire in return had done but little visible damage. As Capt. Barry lay on his berth, enfeebled by the pain of his wound, and waiting for the surgeon's attention, a lieutenant entered.

"The ship remains unmanageable, sir," said he. "The rigging is badly cut up, and there is danger that the fore-top-mast may go by the board. The enemy's fire is telling on the hull, and the carpenter reports two leaks. Eight or ten of the people are killed, and several officers wounded. Have we your consent to striking the colors?"

"No, sir," roared out Barry, sitting bolt upright. "And, if this ship can't be fought without me, I will be carried on deck."

The lieutenant returned with his report; and, when the story became known to the crew, the jackies cheered for their dauntless commander.

"We'll stand by the old man, lads," said one of the petty officers.

"Ay, ay; that we will! We'll stick to him right manfully," was the hearty response.

But now affairs began to look more hopeful for the "Alliance." Far away a gentle rippling of the water rapidly approaching the ship gave promise of wind. The quick eye of an old boatswain caught sight of it. "A breeze, a breeze!" he cried; and the jackies took up the shout, and sprang to their stations at the ropes, ready to take advantage of the coming gust. Soon the breeze arrived, the idly flapping sails filled out, the helmsman felt the responsive pressure of the water as he leaned upon the wheel, the gentle ripple of the water alongside gladdened the ears of the blue-jackets, the ship keeled over to leeward, then swung around responsive to her helm, and the first effective broadside went crashing into the side of the nearest British vessel. After that, the conflict was short. Though the enemy had nearly beaten the "Alliance" in the calm, they were no match for her when she was able to manœuvre. Their resistance was plucky; but when Capt. Barry came on deck, with his wound dressed, he was just in time to see the flags of both vessels come fluttering to the deck.

The two prizes proved to be the "Atlanta" sixteen, and the "Trepassy" fourteen. Both were badly cut up, and together had suffered a loss of forty-one men in killed and wounded. On the "Alliance" were eleven dead, and twenty-one wounded. As the capture of the two vessels threw about two hundred prisoners into the hands of the Americans, and as the "Alliance" was already crowded with captives, Capt. Barry made a cartel of the "Trepassy," and sent her into an English port with all the prisoners. The "Atlanta" he manned with a prize crew, and sent to Boston; but she unluckily fell in with a British cruiser in Massachusetts Bay, and was retaken.

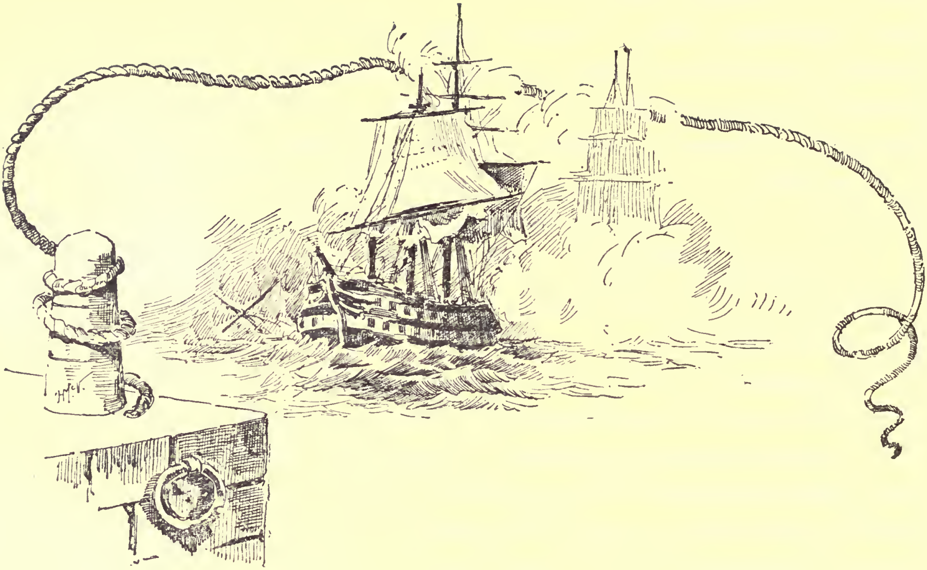
Once more before the cessation of hostilities between Great Britain and the United States threw her out of commission, did the "Alliance" exchange shots with a hostile man-of-war. It was in 1782, when the noble frigate was engaged in bringing specie from the West Indies. She had under convoy a vessel loaded with supplies, and the two had hardly left Havana when some of the enemy's ships caught sight of them, and gave chase. While the chase was in progress, a fifty-gun ship hove in sight, and was soon made out to be a French frigate. Feeling that he had an ally at hand, Barry now wore ship, and attacked the leading vessel, and a spirited action followed, until the enemy, finding himself hard pressed, signalled for his consorts, and Barry, seeing that the French ship made no sign of coming to his aid, drew off.

Irritated by the failure of the French frigate to come to his assistance, Barry bore down upon her and hailed. The French captain declared that the manœuvres of the "Alliance" and her antagonist had made him suspect that the engagement was only a trick to draw him into the power of the British fleet. He had feared that the "Alliance" had been captured, and was being used as a decoy; but now that the matter was made clear to him, he would join the "Alliance" in pursuit of the enemy. This he did; but Barry soon found that the fifty was so slow a sailer, that the "Alliance" might catch up with the British fleet, and be knocked to pieces by their guns, before the Frenchman could get within range. Accordingly he abandoned the chase in disgust, and renewed his homeward course. Some years later, an American gentleman travelling in Europe met the British naval officer who commanded the frigate which Barry had engaged. This officer, then a vice-admiral, declared that he had never before seen a ship so ably fought as was the "Alliance," and acknowledged that the presence of his consorts alone saved him a drubbing.

This engagement was the last fought by the "Alliance" during the Revolution, and with it we practically complete our narrative of the work of the regular navy during that war. One slight disaster to the American cause alone remains to be mentioned. The "Confederacy," a thirty-two-gun frigate built in 1778, was captured by the enemy in 1781. She was an unlucky ship, having been totally dismasted on her first cruise, and captured by an overwhelming force on her second.

Though this chapter completes the story of the regular navy during the Revolution, there remain many important naval events to be described in an ensuing chapter. The work of the ships fitted out by Congress was aided greatly by the armed cruisers furnished by individual States, and privateers. Some of the exploits of these crafts and some desultory maritime hostilities we shall describe in the next chapter. And if the story of the United States navy, as told in these few chapters, seems a record of events trivial as compared with the gigantic naval struggles of 1812 and 1861, it must be remembered that not only were naval architecture and ordnance in their infancy in 1776, but that the country was young, and its sailors unused to the ways of war. But that country, young as it was, produced Paul Jones; and it is to be questioned whether any naval war since has brought forth a braver or nobler naval officer, or one more skilled in the handling of a single ship-of-war.

The result of the war of the Revolution is known to all. A new nation was created by it. These pages will perhaps convince their readers that to the navy was due somewhat the creation of that nation. And if to-day, in its power and might, the United States seems inclined to throw off the navy and belittle its importance, let the memory of Paul Jones and his colleagues be conjured up, to awaken the old enthusiasm over the triumphs of the stars and stripes upon the waves.



CHAPTER XIV.

WORK OF THE PRIVATEERS.—THE "GEN. HANCOCK" AND THE "LEVANT."—EXPLOITS OF THE "PICKERING."—THE "REVENGE."—THE "HOLKAR"—THE "CONGRESS" AND THE "SAVAGE."—THE "HYDER ALI" AND THE "GEN. MONK."—THE WHALE-BOAT HOSTILITIES.—THE OLD JERSEY PRISON-SHIP.

TO CHRONICLE in full the myriad exploits and experiences of the privateers and armed cruisers in the service of individual states during the Revolution, would require a volume thrice the size of this. Moreover, it is difficult and well-nigh impossible to obtain authentic information regarding the movements of this class of armed craft. An immense number of anecdotes of their prowess is current, and some few such narratives will be repeated in this chapter; but, as a rule, they are based only upon tradition, or the imperfect and often incorrect reports in the newspapers of the day.

The loss inflicted upon Great Britain by the activity of American privateers was colossal. For the first year of the war the Continental Congress was unwilling to take so belligerent a step as to encourage privateering; but, in the summer of 1776, the issuing of letters of marque and reprisal was begun, and in a short time all New England had gone to privateering. The ocean fairly swarmed with trim Yankee schooners and brigs, and in the two years that followed nearly eight hundred merchantmen were taken.

Discipline on the privateers was lax, and the profits of a successful cruise were enormous. Often a new speedy craft paid her whole cost of construction on her first cruise. The sailors fairly revelled in money at the close of such a cruise; and, like true jack-tars, they made their money fly as soon as they got ashore. A few days would generally suffice to squander all the earnings of a two-months' cruise; and, penniless but happy, Jack would ship for another bout with fortune.

A volume could be written dealing with the exploits of the privateers, but for our purpose a few instances of their dash and spirit will be enough. Though the purpose of the privateers was purely mercenary, their chief end and aim being to capture defenceless merchantmen, yet they were always ready to fight when fighting was necessary, and more than once made a good showing against stronger and better disciplined naval forces. In many cases audacity and dash more than made up for the lack of strength.

In 1777 two American privateers hung about the British Isles, making captures, and sending their prizes into French ports. The exploits of Paul Jones were equalled by these irregular cruisers. One of them, being in need of provisions, put into the little Irish port of Beerhaven, and lay at anchor for ten hours, while her crew scoured the town in search of the needed stores. A second privateer boldly entered a harbor on the Island of Guernsey. A castle at the entrance of the harbor opened fire upon her, whereupon she came about, and, keeping out of range of the castle guns, captured a large brig that was making for the port. When night fell, the privateer sent a boat's crew ashore, and took captive two officers of the local militia.

In 1778 occurred an action between a private armed ship and a British frigate, in which the privateer was signally successful. On the 19th of September of that year, the "Gen. Hancock," a stout-built, well armed and manned privateer, fell in with the "Levant," a British frigate of thirty-two guns. The "Hancock" made no attempt to avoid a conflict, and opened with a broadside without answering the enemy's hail. The action was stubbornly contested upon both sides. After an hour of fighting, the captain of the Yankee ship, peering through the smoke, saw that the colors no longer waved above his adversary.

"Have you struck?" he shouted.

"No. Fire away," came the response faintly through the roar of the cannon. Two hours longer the combat raged, with the ships lying yard-arm to yard-arm. A ball struck Capt. Hardy of the "Hancock" in the neck, and he was carried below, while the first lieutenant took command of the ship. A few minutes later there arose a deafening roar and blinding flash; a terrific shock threw the men on the American ship to the deck. Stifling smoke darkened the atmosphere; and pieces of timber, cordage, and even horribly torn bits of human flesh began to fall upon the decks. When the smoke cleared away, the Americans looked eagerly for their enemy. Where she had floated a minute or two before, was now a shattered, blackened hulk fast sinking beneath the waves. The surface of the sea for yards around was strewn with wreckage, and here and there men could be seen struggling for life. As ready to save life as they had been to destroy it, the Americans lowered their boats and pulled about, picking up the survivors of the explosion. The boatswain of the ill-fated ship and seventeen of the crew were thus saved, but more than fourscore brave fellows went down with her. The American vessel herself was damaged not a little by the violence of the explosion.

This was not the only case during this year in which a British man-of-war met defeat at the guns of a Yankee privateer. The "Hinchinbrooke," sloop-of-war fourteen; the "York," tender twelve; and the "Enterprise," ten guns, — all struck their colors to private armed vessels flying the stars and stripes.

By 1778 the privateers under the British flag were afloat in no small number. America had no commerce on which they might prey, and they looked forward only to recapturing those British vessels that had been taken by Yankee privateers and sent homeward. That so many British vessels should have found profitable employment in this pursuit, is in itself a speaking tribute to the activity of the American private armed navy.

During the Revolution, as during the second war with Great Britain in 1812, Salem, Mass., and Baltimore, Md., were the principal points from which privateers hailed. In all the early wars of the United States, the term "Salem privateer" carried with it a picture of a fleet schooner, manned with a picked crew of able seamen, commanded by a lanky Yankee skipper who knew the byways of old ocean as well as the highways of trade, armed with eight, four, or six pounders, and a heavy "Long Tom" amidships. Scores of such craft sailed from Salem during the Revolution; and hardly a week passed without two or three returning privateers entering the little port and discharging their crews, to keep the little village in a turmoil until their prize money was spent, or, to use the sailors' phrase, until "no shot was left in the locker."

One of the most successful of the Salem privateers was the "Pickering," a craft carrying a battery of sixteen guns, and a crew of forty-seven men. On one cruise she fought an engagement of an hour and a half with a British cutter of twenty guns; and so roughly did she handle the enemy, that he was glad to sheer off. A day or two later, the "Pickering" overhauled the "Golden Eagle," a large schooner of twenty-two guns and fifty-seven men. The action which followed was ended by the schooner striking her flag. A prize crew was then put aboard the "Golden Eagle," and she was ordered to follow in the wake of her captor. Three days later the British sloop-of-war "Achilles" hove in sight, and gave chase to the privateer and her prize. After a fifteen hours' chase the prize was overhauled; and the sloop-of-war, after taking possession of her, continued in pursuit of the privateer. But while the privateersmen had preferred flight to fighting while nothing was at stake, they did not propose to let their prize be taken from them without a resistance, however great the odds against them. Accordingly they permitted the "Achilles" to overhaul them, and a sharp action followed. The British tried to force the combat by boarding; but the Americans, with pikes and cutlasses, drove them back to their own ship. Then the two vessels separated, and during the rest of the conflict came no nearer each other than the length of a pistol-shot. At this distance they carried on a spirited cannonade for upwards of three hours, when the "Achilles," concluding that she had had enough, sheered off. Thereupon, the "Pickering" coolly ran back to her late prize, took possession of her, captured the lieutenant and prize crew that the "Achilles" had put in charge of her, and continued her cruise.

A good example of the Baltimore privateers was the "Revenge," mounting eighteen guns, with a crew of fifty men. In 1780 this vessel was commanded by Capt. Alexander Murray of the regular navy. She was engaged by a large number of Baltimore merchants to convoy a fleet of merchantmen, but had hardly started to sea with her charges when she fell in with a fleet of British vessels, and was forced to retreat up the Patuxent River. While there, the American fleet was strengthened by several privateers and armed merchant-vessels which joined it, so that it was felt safe to try again to get to sea. Accordingly the attempt was made; but, though the captains of the fleet had signed a solemn compact to stand together in case of the danger, the sudden appearance of a fleet of hostile armed vessels sent all scurrying up the Patuxent again, except one brig and a schooner. The British fleet consisted of a ship of eighteen guns, a brig of sixteen, and three privateer schooners. Leaving the schooners to his two faithful consorts, Murray threw himself between the two larger vessels and the flying merchantmen. Seeing themselves thus balked of their prey, the enemy turned fiercely upon the "Revenge," but were met with so spirited a resistance, that they hauled off after an hour's fighting. The other American vessels behaved equally well, and the discomfiture of the British was complete.

Philadelphia, though not looked upon as a centre of privateering activity, furnished one privateer that made a notable record. This was the "Holkar," sixteen guns. In April, 1780, she captured a British schooner of ten guns; and in May of the same year she fought a desperate action with a British privateer brig, the name of which has never been ascertained. Twice the Briton sheered off to escape the telling fire of the American; but the "Holkar" pressed him closely, and only the appearance of a second British armed vessel at the scene of the action saved the Englishman from capture. This battle was one of the most sanguinary ever fought by private armed vessels; for of the crew of the "Holkar" six were killed and sixteen wounded, including the captain and first lieutenant, while of the enemy there were about the same number killed and twenty wounded. Three months later this same privateer fell in with the British sixteen-gun cutter "Hypocrite," and captured her after a sharp conflict.

Perhaps the most audacious privateering exploit was that of the privateers "Hero," "Hope," and "Swallow," in July, 1782. The captains of these craft, meeting after an unprofitable season upon the high seas, conceived the idea of making a descent upon the Nova Scotian town of Lunenberg, some thirty-five miles from Halifax. Little time was wasted in discussion. Privateers are not hampered by official red tape. So it happened that early in the month the three privateers appeared off the harbor of the threatened town, having landed a shore party of ninety men. Before the invaders the inhabitants retreated rapidly, making some slight resistance. Two block-houses, garrisoned by British regulars, guarded the town. One of these fortresses the Americans burned, whereupon the British established themselves in the second, and prepared to stand a siege. Luckily for the Americans, the block-house was within range of the harbor; so that the three privateers took advantageous positions, and fired a few rounds of solid shot into the enemy's wooden citadel. The besieged then made haste to raise the white flag, and surrendered themselves prisoners-of-war. When the Yankee ships left the harbor, they took with them a large quantity of merchandise and provisions, and a thousand pounds sterling by way of ransom.

One more conflict, in which the irregular naval forces of the United States did credit to themselves, must be described before dismissing the subject of privateering. In September, 1781, the British sloop-of-war "Savage" was cruising off the southern coast of the United States. Her officers and men were in a particularly good humor, and felt a lively sense of self-satisfaction; for they had just ascended the Potomac, and plundered Gen. Washington's estate, — an exploit which would make them heroes in the eyes of their admiring countrymen.

Off Charleston the "Savage" encountered the American privateer "Congress," of about the same strength as herself, — twenty guns and one hundred and fifty men. In one respect the "Congress" was the weaker; for her crew was composed largely of landsmen, and her marines were a company of militia, most of whom were sadly afflicted with seasickness. Nevertheless, the Yankee craft rushed boldly into action, opening fire with her bow-chasers as soon as she came within range. Like two savage bull-dogs, the two ships rushed at each other, disdaining all manœuvring, and seemingly intent only upon locking in a deadly struggle, yard-arm to yard-arm At first the "Savage" won a slight advantage. Swinging across the bow of the "Congress," she raked her enemy twice. But soon the two ships lay side by side, and the thunder of the cannon was constant. The militia-marines on the "Congress" did good service. Stationed in the tops, on the forecastle, the quarter-deck, and every elevated place on the ship, they poured down upon the deck of the enemy a murderous fire. The jackies at the great guns poured in broadsides so well directed that soon the "Savage" had not a rope left with which to manage the sails. Her quarter-deck was cleared, and not a man was to be seen to serve as a mark for the American gunners. So near lay the two vessels to each other, that the fire from the guns scorched the gunners on the opposite ship. The antagonists were inextricably entangled; for the mizzen-mast of the "Savage" had been shot away, and had fallen into the after-rigging of the "Congress." There was no flight for the weaker vessel. When she could no longer fight, surrender was her only recourse. Neither vessel showed any colors, for both ensigns had been shot away early in the action. Accordingly, when the boatswain of the "Savage" was seen upon the forecastle wildly waving his arms, it was taken as an evidence of surrender; and the fire slackened until his voice could be heard.

"Give us quarter," he cried hoarsely; "we are a wreck, and strike our flag."

The firing then ceased; but, when the lieutenant of the "Congress" ordered a boat lowered in which to board the prize, the old boatswain came back with the report, —

"Boats all knocked to pieces, sir. Couldn't find one that would float."

Accordingly the two vessels had to be slowly drawn together, and the boarding party reached the deck of the prize by clambering over a spar which served as a bridge. When they reached the prize, they found her decks covered with dead and wounded men. The slaughter had been terrible. Twenty-three men were killed, and thirty-one wounded. On the "Congress" were thirty, killed and wounded together. One of the wounded Americans was found lying with his back braced against the foot of the bowsprit, cheering for the victory, and crying, —

"If they have broken my legs, my hands and heart are still whole."

Throughout this sanguinary action both parties showed the greatest courage and determination. Two vessels of the two most perfectly organized regular navies in the world could not have been better handled, nor could they have more stubbornly contested for the victory.

A class of armed vessels outside the limits of the regular navy, but very active and efficient in the service of the country, was the maritime forces of the individual states. Before Congress had seen the necessity for a naval force, several of the colonies had been alive to the situation, and fitted out cruisers of their own. Even after the Revolution had developed into a war of the first magnitude, and after the colonies had assumed the title of states, and delegated to Congress the duty of providing for the common defence, they still continued to fit out their own men-of-war to protect their ports and act as convoys for their merchant fleets. Though vessels in this service seldom cruised far from the coast of their home colony, yet occasionally they met the vessels of the enemy, and many sharp actions were fought by them.

Of all the actions fought by the State cruisers, the most hotly contested was that between the Pennsylvania cruiser "Hyder Ali," and the British sloop-of-war "Gen. Monk." The "Hyder Ali" was a merchantman, bought by the state just as she was about departing on a voyage to the West Indies. She was in no way calculated for a man-of-war; but the need was pressing, and she was pierced for eight ports on a side, and provided with a battery of six-pounders. The command of this vessel was given to Joshua Barney, a young officer with an extensive experience of Yankee privateers and British prisons, and whose later exploits in the United States navy are familiar to readers of "Blue-Jackets of 1812."

Barney's instructions were, not to go to sea, but to patrol the Delaware River and Bay, and see that no privateer lay in wait for the merchant-vessels that cleared from the port of Philadelphia. In April, 1782, the "Hyder Ali" stood down Delaware Bay at the head of a large fleet of outward-bound merchantmen. When Cape May was reached, strong head-winds sprang up, and the whole fleet anchored to await more favorable weather before putting out to sea. While they lay at anchor, the "Hyder Ali" sighted a trio of British vessels, two ships and a brig, rounding the cape. Instantly Barney signalled his convoy to trip anchor and retreat, a signal which was promptly obeyed by all save one too daring craft, that tried to slip round the cape, and get to sea, but fell into the hands of the enemy. Soon the whole fleet, with the "Hyder Ali" bringing up the rear, fled up the bay. The British followed in hot pursuit.

At a point half-way up the bay the pursuers parted; one of the ships, a frigate, cutting through a side channel in the hope of intercepting the fugitives. The other two pursuers, a privateer brig and a sloop-of-war, continued in the wake of the "Hyder Ali." The brig proved herself a clipper, and soon came up with the American vessel, which promptly offered battle. The challenge was declined by the privateer, which fired a harmless broadside, and continued on up the bay. Barney let her pass, for he had determined to risk the dangers of an unequal combat with the sloop-of-war. This vessel came up rapidly; and as she drew near Barney luffed up suddenly, and let fly a broadside. This somewhat staggered the enemy, who had expected only a tame surrender; but she quickly recovered, and came boldly on. At this juncture Barney turned to his helmsman, and said, —

"Now, when I give the word, pay no attention to my order, but put the helm hard-a-starboard. Pay no heed to the actual command I may give you."

The British vessel was then within half pistol-shot, and her forward guns were beginning to bear. From his station on the quarter-deck Barney shouted to his steersman in stentorian tones, —

"Port your helm. Hard-a-port."

The order was clearly heard on board the enemy, and he prepared to manœuvre his ship accordingly. But the steersman of the "Hyder Ali" remembered his instructions; and before the enemy discovered the ruse, the American ship lay athwart the other's bow, and the bowsprit of the enemy was caught in the "Hyder Ali's" rigging, giving the latter a raking position. Quickly the Yankee gunners seized the opportunity. Not five miles away was a British frigate ready to rush to the assistance of her consort, and whatever was to be done by the bold lads of Pennsylvania had to be done with expedition. No cheer rose from their ranks; but with grim determination they worked at the great guns, pouring in rapid and effective broadsides. The explosions of the two batteries were like the deafening peals of thunder echoed and re-echoed in some mountain-gorge. Smoke hid the vessels from sight, and the riflemen in the tops could only occasionally catch sight of the figures of the enemy. The enemy had twenty guns to Barney's sixteen; but he was outmanœuvred at the start, and this disadvantage he never overcame. Half an hour from the time of the opening of the battle, his flag was struck, and the Americans, with lusty cheers, took possession of their prize. There was no time for ceremony. The frigate had seen the conflict from afar, and was bearing down upon the two antagonists. So without even asking the name of the captured vessel, Barney hastily threw a prize crew aboard, ordered her to proceed to Philadelphia, and himself remained behind to cover the retreat.

Some hours later, having escaped the British frigate, the two vessels sailed up to a Philadelphia wharf. The scars of battle had been in no way healed: the tattered sails, the shattered hulls and bulwarks, the cordage hanging loosely from the masts, told the story of battle. The crowd that rushed to the wharf, and peered curiously about the decks of the two vessels, saw a ghastly and horrible sight. For the battle had been as sanguinary as it was spirited, and the dead still lay where they fell. On the British vessel, the "Gen. Monk," lay the lifeless bodies of twenty men; while twenty-six wounded, whose blood stained the deck, lay groaning in the cockpit below. On the "Hyder Ali" were four killed and eleven wounded.

This action, for steadiness and brilliancy, was not surpassed by any naval duel of the war of the Revolution. By it the name of Joshua Barney was put upon a plane with those of the most eminent commanders in the regular navy; and had not the war speedily terminated, he would have been granted a commission and a ship by the United States.

While the chief naval events of the war for independence have now been recounted, there still remain certain incidents connected more or less closely with the war on the water, which deserve a passing mention. One of these is the curious desultory warfare carried on in and about New York Harbor by fishermen and longshoremen in whale-boats, dories, sharpies, and similar small craft.

From 1776 until the close of the war, New York City and the region bordering upon the harbor were occupied by the British. Provisions were needed for their support, and were brought from Connecticut and New Jersey in small sailing craft, chiefly whale-boats. These boats the patriots often intercepted, and desperate encounters upon the water were frequent. Nor did the Yankee boatmen confine their attacks to the provision boats alone. In the summer of 1775 the British transport "Blue Mountain Valley" was captured by a band of hardy Jerseymen, who concealed themselves in the holds of four small sail-boats until fairly alongside the enemy's vessel, when they swarmed out and drove the British from the deck of their vessel.

Two New Jersey fishermen, Adam Hyler and William Marriner, were particularly active in this class of warfare. Twice the British sent armed forces to capture them, and, failing in that, burned their boats. But the sturdy patriots were undaunted, and building new boats, waged a relentless war against the followers of King George. Every Tory that fished in the bay was forced to pay them tribute; and many of these gentry, so obnoxious to the Yankees, were visited in their homes at dead of night, and solemnly warned to show more moderation in their disapproval of the American cause. When the occasion offered, the two Jerseymen gathered armed bands, and more than one small British vessel fell a prey to their midnight activity. Two British corvettes were captured by them in Coney Island Bay, and burned to the water's edge. With one of the blazing vessels forty thousand dollars in specie was destroyed, — a fact that Hyler bitterly lamented when he learned of it.

No narrative of the events of the Revolution would be complete without some description of the floating prison-houses in which the British immured the hapless soldiers and sailors who fell into their hands. Of these the chief one was a dismasted hulk known as the "Old Jersey" prison-ship, and moored in Wallabout Bay near New York City. No pen can adequately describe the horrors of this prison; but some extracts from the published recollections of men once imprisoned in her noisome hold will give some idea of the miserable fate of those condemned to be imprisoned on her.

Thomas Andros, a sailor taken by the British with the privateer "Fair American," writes of the "Old Jersey:" "This was an old sixty-four-gun ship, which, through age, had become unfit for further actual service. She was stripped of every spar and all her rigging. After a battle with a French fleet, her lion figure-head was taken away to repair another ship. No appearance of ornament was left, and nothing remained but an old unsightly rotten hulk; and doubtless no other ship in the British navy ever proved the means of the destruction of so many human beings. It is computed that no less than eleven thousand American seamen perished in her. When I first became an inmate of this abode of suffering, despair, and death, there were about four hundred prisoners on board; but in a short time they amounted to twelve hundred. In a short time we had two hundred or more sick and dying lodged in the forepart of the lower gun-deck, where all the prisoners were confined at night. Utter derangement was a common symptom of yellow-fever; and to increase the horror of the darkness that surrounded us (for we were allowed no light between decks), the voice of warning would be heard, 'Take heed to yourselves. There is a madman stalking through the ship with a knife in his hand.' I sometimes found the man a corpse in the morning, by whose side I laid myself down at night. In the morning the hatchways were thrown open; and we were allowed to ascend on the upper deck all at once, and remain on the upper deck all day. But the first object that met our view in the morning -was an appalling spectacle, — a boat loaded with dead bodies, conveying them to the Long Island shore, where they were very slightly covered."

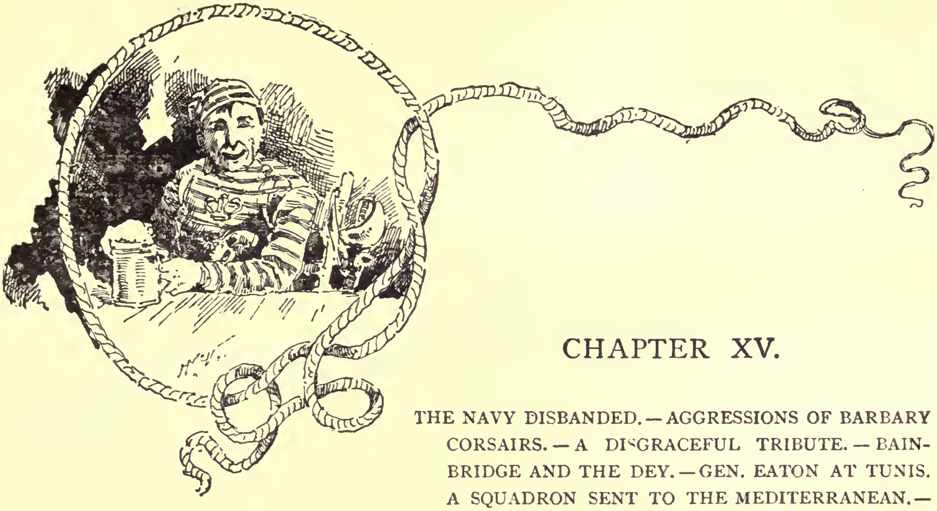
Ebenezer Fox, another privateersman, has left his recollections of this dreadful prison. His description of the food upon which the unhappy prisoners were forced to subsist is interesting: —

"Our bill of fare was as follows: on Sunday, one pound of biscuit, one pound of pork, and half a pint of pease; Monday, one pound of biscuit, one pint of oatmeal, and two ounces of butter; Tuesday, one pound of biscuit, and two pounds of salt beef; Wednesday, one and a half pounds of flour, and two ounces of suet; Thursday was a repetition of Sunday's fare; Friday, of Monday's; and Saturday, of Tuesday's.

"If this food had been of good quality and properly cooked, as we had no labor to perform, it would have kept us comfortable, at least from suffering; but this was not the case. All our food appeared to be damaged. As for the pork, we were cheated out of it more than half the time; and when it was obtained, one would have judged from its motley hues, exhibiting the consistence and appearance of variegated fancy soap, that it was the flesh of the porpoise or sea-hog, and had been an inhabitant of the ocean rather than of the stye. The pease were generally damaged, and, from the imperfect manner in which they were cooked, were about as indigestible as grape-shot. The butter the reader will not suppose was the real 'Goshen;' and had it not been for its adhesive properties to hold together the particles of the biscuit, that had been so riddled by the worms as to lose all their attraction of cohesion, we should have considered it no desirable addition to our viands."

But it is unnecessary to prolong the painful description of the horrors of this floating charnel house. Its name and record must ever rest as a dark stain upon the name of England. It is seldom possible in war-time to house and care for the immense hordes of prisoners-of-war with the same regard for their comfort which is shown ordinarily to convicted felons. War is brutal; it is unfeeling, and the weaker party must always suffer. But such sufferings as those of the "Old Jersey" captives can be excused upon no ground. There was no need to crowd hundreds of men into a space hardly large enough for a few score. To starve her prisoners, should not be part of a great nation's policy. The one plea which England can urge in extenuation of the "Old Jersey" is that it had its day at a time when those broad principles of humanity, now so generally accepted, had not yet been applied to the rules of war.

With this chapter ends the narrative of the naval events of the war of the Revolution. It was not a great naval war, for the belligerent nations were not sufficiently well matched in naval strength. But it brought forth Paul Jones and more than one other brave and able commander. It established a new flag upon the seas, a flag that has ever since held an honorable position among the insignia of the foremost nations of the earth. And in the war of the Revolution, as in every war in which the United States has taken part since, there was manifested the wonderful ability of the American people to rush into a conflict half prepared, and gain daily in strength until the cause for which they fight is won. In 1776 that cause was liberty, and in its behalf none fought more bravely than the lads who wore the blue jackets of the American navy.



CHAPTER XV.

THE NAVY DISBANDED.—AGGRESSIONS OF BARBARY CORSAIRS.—A DISGRACEFUL TRIBUTE.—BAINBRIDGE AND THE DEY.—GEN. EATON AT TUNIS. A SQUADRON SENT TO THE MEDITERRANEAN.—DECATUR AND THE SPANIARDS.—THE "ENTERPRISE" AND THE "TRIPOLI."—AMERICAN SLAVES IN ALGIERS.

PEACE having been signed with Great Britain in 1783, the nucleus of a navy then in existence was disbanded. Partly this was due to the disinclination of the sturdy Republicans to keep a standing establishment, either naval or military, in time of peace. The same tendency of the American mind to disregard the adage, "In time of peace, prepare for war," is observable to-day. But the chief reason for the dissolution of the navy lay in the impossibility of collecting funds to pay for its maintenance. The states had formed themselves into a confederacy, but so jealously had each state guarded its individual rights, that no power was left to the general government. The navy being a creation of the general government, was therefore left without means of support; and in 1785 the last remaining frigate, the "Alliance," was sold because there was not enough money in the treasury to pay for her needed repairs.

For eight years thereafter the nation remained without a navy. But gradually there sprung up a very considerable maritime commerce under the flag of the United States. The stars and stripes began to be a familiar sight in sea-ports as far away as China and Japan. But as far as it afforded any protection to the vessel above which it waved, that banner might have been a meaningless bit of striped bunting. In 1785 the Dey of Algiers, looking to piracy for his income, sent his piratical cruisers out into the Atlantic to seize upon the merchantmen of the new nation that had no navy to enforce its authority. Two vessels were captured, and their crews sold into disgraceful slavery in Algiers.

When the first Congress of the United States under the present Constitution assembled, President Washington called the attention of the law-makers to the crying need for a navy. But war had set in between Portugal and Algiers; the Algerian corsairs were blockaded in their ports, and American vessels were enjoying a temporary immunity from piratical attack. Therefore Congress hesitated.

But in 1793 peace was suddenly arranged between Portugal and Algiers. Immediately the corsairs swarmed out of the Mediterranean Sea, and swooped down upon the American merchantmen. In a few weeks four ships were in their hands, and the gangs of white slaves in Tunis and Tripoli were re-enforced by nearly two hundred luckless Yankee sailors. Then Congress awoke, and ordered the immediate building of six frigates. The ships were laid down, the work was well under way, naval officers had been appointed, and every thing seemed to point to the revival of the American navy, when a treaty was negotiated with Algiers, and all work was stopped.

And what a treaty it was! By it the United States relinquished every claim to the rights of a sovereign nation. It agreed to pay an annual tribute to the piratical Dey, in consideration of his granting to American vessels the right of travel on the high seas. And when some slight delay occurred in making the first payment of tribute, the obsequious government presented the Barbary corsair with a frigate, to allay his wrath.

We must pass hastily over the time during which this iniquitous treaty was in force. Suffice it to say, that by it the United States paid the Dey more than a million dollars. For the same sum his piratical establishment might have been scattered like the sands of the desert.

In May, 1800, it fell to the lot of Capt. William Bainbridge, commanding the frigate "George Washington," to carry the annual tribute to Algiers. On arriving there he was treated with contempt by the Dey, who demanded that he put the "Washington" at the service of Algiers, to carry her ambassador to Constantinople. "You pay me tribute, by which you become my slaves," said the Dey; "I have therefore a right to order you as I may think proper."

Bainbridge protested, but to no avail. He had anchored his frigate under the guns of the Dey's castle, and to disobey meant capture and slavery. Accordingly he complied, but despatched a letter to the authorities at home, saying, "I hope I may never again be sent to Algiers with tribute, unless I am authorized to deliver it from the mouth of our cannon."

When Bainbridge reached the United States, after faithfully discharging the errand of the Dey, he found that it was unlikely that either he or any other officer would be forced to carry any further tribute to the Barbary pirates. For, while the tribute paid to Algiers had merely changed the attitude of that country from open hostility to contemptuous forbearance, it had brought the other Barbary states clamoring to the United States for tribute. Tunis and Tripoli demanded blood-money; and each emphasized its demand by capturing a few Yankee merchantmen, and selling their crews into slavery.

The agents or ambassadors sent by the United States to these powers were treated with the utmost contempt; and while their lives were often in danger, their property was always considered the fair prey of the Barbarian ruler to whose domain they were sent. To Tunis was sent Gen. William Eaton, an American politician, who has left a record of his experiences in the land of the Bey. Some of the entries in his journal are very pithy. Thus under the date of Aug. 11, 1799, he wrote, —

"Some good friend had informed the Bey that I had an elegant Grecian mirror in my house. To-day he sent a request for it, pretending that he wanted it for the cabin of his pleasure-boat, now about to be launched. So it is. If the consuls have a good piece of furniture, or any other good thing which strikes the Bey's fancy, he never hesitates to ask for it; and they have no alternative but to give it. They have suffered this to become usance also.

"12th. Sent the Bey the mirror."

A letter from Gen. Eaton to the Secretary of State, in 1801, tells of the capacity of the Bey. A fire in the regal palace destroyed fifty thousand stand of small-arms. The next day the monarch ordered Eaton to procure from the United States ten thousand stand to help make up the loss. Eaton demurred. "The Bey did not send for you to ask your advice," said the prime minister, "but to order you to communicate his demands to your Government."

Eaton still protested, pointed out the fact that the United States had already paid the Bey heavy tribute, and asked when these extortionate demands were to end.

"Never," was the cool response; and the interview ended.

But by this time the United States authorities had perceived the error they had committed in temporizing with the Barbary powers. They had quieted Algiers by the payment of a heavy tribute, and the gift of a frigate. But this had only excited the cupidity of the other petty states. Tunis demanded like tribute. The Bashaw of Tripoli, discontented with his share of the spoils, cut down the flag-staff before the American consulate, and sent out his cruisers to prey upon American commerce. Accordingly, on the 20th of May, 1801, the Secretary of the Navy ordered a squadron prepared to proceed to the Mediterranean, and bring the rapacious Arabs to terms.

The vessels chosen for this service were the "President," Commodore Richard Dale; "Philadelphia," Capt. Barron; "Essex," Capt. Bainbridge; and the schooner "Enterprise," Lieut.-Commandant Sterrett. Though the fleet in itself was powerful, the commodore was hampered by the timid and vacillating instructions of Congress. War had not been actually declared, and he was therefore to commit no overt act of hostility. The vessels of the fleet were to be employed simply to convoy American merchantmen in and out of the Mediterranean Sea, and to be in readiness to ward off any hostile action on the part of any of the Barbary powers.

On July 1 the fleet entered the roadstead at Gibraltar, and anchored in the shadow of the famous rock. Here the Americans found two of the most rapacious of the Tripolitan corsairs lying at anchor; one a ship of twenty-six guns under the command of the Tripolitan admiral, and the other a brig of sixteen guns. To keep an eye on these piratical worthies, the "Philadelphia" was ordered to remain at Gibraltar, while the other vessels scattered. The "Essex" was ordered to cruise along the northern shore of the Mediterranean, gathering up all the American merchantmen, and convoying them to sea. The "President" and the "Enterprise" made sail for Algiers, to convince the ruler of that country that it would be impolitic for him to declare war against the United States at that time. The desired effect was produced; for the sight of an American frigate did more to tone down the harshness of the Dey's utterances, than could the most extortionate tribute.

The cruise of the "Essex" was uneventful, save for a dispute between the officers of the American man-of-war and a Spanish xebec in the roads of Barcelona. The trouble arose in this wise: —

The "Essex," though a small vessel, was perfectly appointed, of handsome model and appearance, and her crew was drilled to the highest possible state of discipline and efficiency. When she cast anchor at Barcelona, she straightway became the talk of the town, and her officers became the lions of the hour, vastly to the disgust of the Spaniards on the xebec lying in the same port. Accordingly they took every opportunity to annoy the Americans, challenging the boats of the "Essex" as they passed the xebec, and not scrupling to use abusive language to Capt. Bainbridge himself. One night a boat, under command of Lieut. Stephen Decatur, was brought under the guns of the xebec, and held there while the Spaniards shouted insults from the deck above. Decatur called for the officer in command, and remonstrated with him, but receiving no satisfaction, ordered his men to shove off, declaring he would call again in the morning.

Accordingly, in the forenoon of the following day, a boat from the "Essex," with Decatur in the stern-sheets, made for the Spanish vessel. Coming alongside, Decatur went on board, and asked for the officer who had been in command the night previous. He was told that the man he sought had gone ashore.

"Well, then," thundered Decatur, in tones that could be heard all over the vessel, "tell him that Lieut. Decatur of the frigate 'Essex' pronounces him a cowardly scoundrel, and when they meet on shore he will cut his ears off." And having thrown this bombshell into the enemy's camp, Decatur returned to his ship.

The duel was never fought, for the civil authorities bestirred themselves to prevent it. But the matter was taken up by the United States minister to Spain, who never permitted it to rest until the fullest apology was made by Spain for the indignities to which the American naval officers had been subjected.

After having collected a large number of merchantmen, and taken them safely out of the reach of Tripolitan cruisers, the "Essex" showed her colors in the chief Barbary ports, and rejoined the flagship in time to return to the United States in December.

While the "Essex" had been thus pacificly employed, the little schooner "Enterprise" had carried off the honors by fighting the first and only pitched battle of the year. This little craft, after accompanying the "President" to Algiers, was ordered to Malta. While on the way thither she fell in with a polacre-rigged ship flying the Tripolitan colors. Closer inspection showed her to be a notorious corsair, well known for the constant and merciless warfare she waged upon American merchantmen. The stars and stripes, floating at the peak of the American man-of-war, alarmed the Moors, and they opened fire without waiting for a hail. The "Enterprise" took up a position alongside, and at a distance of less than a pistol-shot. Broadside succeeded broadside in rapid succession. The aim of the Americans was better than that of the enemy, and the effect of their fire was observable whenever the breeze cleared away the dense smoke that hid the vessels from each other. But the ordnance of both was light, so that the combat was greatly prolonged. The vessels were almost equally matched; for the "Enterprise" carried twelve guns and ninety men, while the Tripolitan mounted fourteen guns, and had a crew of eighty-five men.

For two hours the battle continued, and the roar of the cannon and the rattle of small-arms were incessant. The day was calm and clear, with the still, warm air prevalent in the Mediterranean. Hardly was the breeze strong enough to carry away the sulphurous cloud of smoke that formed the one blot on the fair surface of the fairest of all seas. At last the Americans noticed that the fire of the enemy had ceased. Eagerly they peered through the smoke, and when the outline of their adversary could be made out, three ringing cheers told that the Tripolitan flag waved no longer in its place. Leaving their guns, the Americans were preparing to board the prize, when they were astonished to receive another broadside, and see the colors of their adversary again hoisted.

With cries of rage the Yankee seamen again went to quarters; and, if they had fought boldly before, they now fought viciously. They cared little to take the prize: their chief end was to send her, and the treacherous corsairs that manned her, to the bottom. The Tripolitans in their turn exerted every energy to conquer. Bringing their vessel alongside the "Enterprise," they strove repeatedly to board, only to be beaten back again and again. Finally, after receiving two raking broadsides from the "Enterprise," she again struck her flag.

This time Capt. Sterrett was in no haste to consider the combat ended. Keeping his men at the guns, he ordered the Tripolitan to come under the quarter of the "Enterprise." But no sooner had the enemy done so than she renewed the conflict for the third time, by attempting to board.

"No quarter for the treacherous dogs," was then the cry on the American vessel. "Fight on, and send them to the bottom."

The rest of the battle was wholly in favor of the "Enterprise." Several times she raked her antagonist, doing great execution. Many shots took effect between wind and water; and the cry arose on the decks of the Tripolitan, that she was sinking. The "Enterprise" kept at a safe distance, and by skilful sailing chose her own position, so that she could pour in a deliberate and murderous fire. Bitterly were the Tripolitans punished for their treachery. Their decks ran red with blood, half of their officers were shot down, the cries of their wounded rose shrill above the thunder of the cannon. Her flag was struck, but to this the American gunners paid no heed. The repeated treachery of the corsairs had left in the minds of the Yankee sailors but one thought, — to send the ship to the bottom, and rid the ocean of so pestiferous a craft.

But, enraged though they were, the Americans could not wholly cast aside their feelings of humanity. Though they had been twice deceived, they could not keep up their attack upon a vessel so sorely stricken as to be unable to respond to their fire. And when at last the commander of the Tripolitan, a venerable old man with a flowing beard, appeared in the waist of the ship, sorely wounded, and, bowing submissively, cast the colors of his vessel into the sea, then the fire of the "Enterprise" ceased, although the usages of war would have justified the Americans in exterminating their treacherous foe.

Having captured his enemy, Capt. Sterrett was in some uncertainty as to what to do with it. The instructions under which he sailed gave him no authority to take prizes. After some deliberation, he concluded to rob the captured vessel, which proved to be the "Tripoli," of her power for evil. Accordingly he sent Lieut. David Porter, the daring naval officer of whose exploits we have already spoken in the "Blue-Jackets of 1812," on board the prize, with instructions to dismantle her. Porter carried out his instructions admirably. With immense satisfaction the jackies he took with him forced the Tripolitans to cut away their masts, throw overboard all their cannon, cutlasses, pistols, and other arms; cut their sails to pieces; throw all ammunition into the sea, and, to use a nautical expression, "strip the ship to a girtline." One jury-mast and small sail alone was left.

Porter then pointed out to the crestfallen Tripolitan captain, Mahomet Sons, that the "Enterprise" had not lost a man in the action, while of the corsairs not less than fifty were either killed or wounded.

"Go," said he sternly to the cowering Mussulman, "go tell the Bashaw of Tripoli, and the people of your country, that in future they may expect only a tribute of powder and ball from the sailors of the United States."

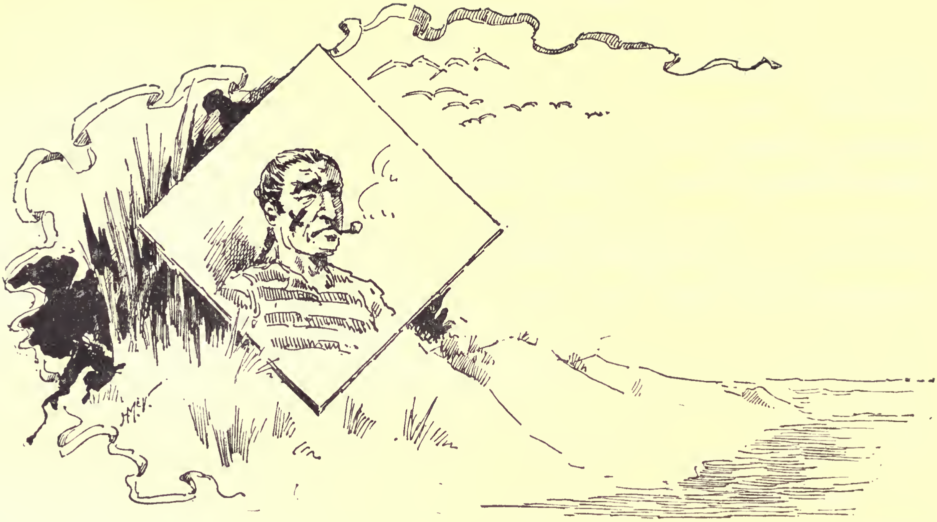
Amid the jeers and execrations of the Yankee tars, the crippled Tripolitan hulk, with her dead and dying, drifted slowly away. When she reached Tripoli, the anger of the Bashaw was unappeasable. He had expected his cruiser to return freighted deep with plunder, and crowded with American slaves. She had returned a dismantled hulk. In vain her commander showed his wounds to his wrathful master, and told of the size of his enemy, and the vigor of his resistance. The rage of the Bashaw demanded a sacrifice, and the luckless Mahomet Sons was led through the streets of Tripoli tied to a jackass. This in itself was the deepest degradation possible for a Mussulman, but the Bashaw supplemented it with five hundred bastinadoes well laid on. This severe punishment, together with the repeated assertions of the sailors of the defeated ship, that the dogs of Christians had fired enchanted shot, so terrified the seafaring people of Tripoli that it was almost impossible for the Bashaw to muster a ship's crew for a year after.

The battle between the "Enterprise" and the "Tripoli" alone saved the first year of the war from being entirely puerile. Certain it is that the distinguished naval officers who accompanied the fleet to the Mediterranean were so hedged about with political red tape, that they were powerless to take a step in defence of the honor of their country. While they were empowered to rescue any American ship that might be discovered in the grasp of a corsair, they were powerless to attempt the rescue of the hundreds of Americans held by Bashaw, Bey, and Dey as slaves. Commodore Dale, indeed, through diplomacy, managed to free a few of the enslaved

Americans. Having blockaded the harbor of Tripoli with the frigate "President," he captured a Greek vessel having a score or more of Tripolitan soldiers aboard. He then sent word to the Bashaw that he would exchange these prisoners for an equal number of Americans; but the monarch apparently cared little for his subjects, for he replied that he would not give one American slave for the whole lot. After much argument, an exchange was made upon the basis of three Tripolitans to one Yankee.

It is hard, even at this late day, to regard the policy of the United States towards the Barbary powers with feelings other than of mortification. Tunis, Tripoli, Algiers, and Morocco constantly preyed on our commerce, and enslaved our sailors. In the streets of Algiers worked American slaves, chained together, and wearing iron collars upon their necks. Their lives were the property of their owners, and they suffered unheard of privations and tortures. Yet at this very time the United States kept a consul in Algiers, and maintained friendly relations with the Dey. Indeed, a historian writing in 1795 applauds the American Government for the care it took of its citizens enslaved in Algiers, by providing each with a suit of clothing yearly!

But the continued aggressions and extortionate demands of the Barbary powers became at last unbearable. The expedition to the Mediterranean, under Commodore Dale, was but the premonitory muttering before the storm. Dale returned to the United States in December, 1801, and his report led to the organization of the naval expedition that was to finally crush the piratical powers of Barbary.



CHAPTER XVI.

MORE VIGOROUS POLICY.—COMMODORE MORRIS SENT TO THE MEDITERRANEAN.—PORTER'S CUTTING-OUT EXPEDITION.—COMMODORE PREBLE SENT TO THE MEDITERRANEAN.—HIS ENCOUNTER WITH A BRITISH MAN-OF-WAR.—THE LOSS OF THE "PHILADELPHIA."—DECATUR'S DARING ADVENTURE.

THE return of Commodore Dale from the Mediterranean, and the reports which he brought of the continued aggressions and insolence of the Barbary powers, made a very marked change in the temper of the people of the United States. Early in 1802 Congress passed laws, which, though not in form a formal declaration of war, yet permitted the vigorous prosecution of hostilities against Tripoli, Algiers, or any other of the Barbary powers. A squadron was immediately ordered into commission for the purpose of chastising the corsairs, and was put under the command of Commodore Morris. The vessels detailed for this service were the "Chesapeake," thirty-eight; "Constellation," thirty-eight; "New York," thirty-six; "John Adams," twenty-eight; "Adams," twenty-eight; and "Enterprise," twelve. Some months were occupied in getting the vessels into condition for sea; and while the

"Enterprise" started in February for the Mediterranean, it was not until September that the last ship of the squadron followed her. It will be remembered that the "Philadelphia" and "Essex," of Dale's squadron, had been left in the Mediterranean; and as the "Boston," twenty-eight, had been ordered to cruise in those waters after carrying United States Minister Livingstone to France, the power of the Western Republic was well supported before the coast-line of Barbary.

The "Enterprise" and the "Constellation" were the first of the squadron to reach the Mediterranean, and they straightway proceeded to Tripoli to begin the blockade of that port. One day, while the "Constellation" was lying at anchor some miles from the town, the lookout reported that a number of small craft were stealing along, close in shore, and evidently trying to sneak into the harbor. Immediately the anchor was raised, and the frigate set out in pursuit. The strangers proved to be a number of Tripolitan gun-boats, and for a time it seemed as though they would be cut off by the swift-sailing frigate. As they came within range the "Constellation" opened a rapid and well-directed fire, which soon drove the gun-boats to protected coves and inlets in the shore. The Americans then lowered their boats with the intention of engaging the enemy alongshore, but at this moment a large body of cavalry came galloping out from town to the rescue. The Yankees, therefore, returned to their ship, and, after firing a few broadsides at the cavalry, sailed away.

Thereafter, for nearly a year, the record of the American squadron in the Mediterranean was uneventful. Commodore Morris showed little disposition to push matters to an issue, but confined his operations to sailing from port to port, and instituting brief and imperfect blockades.

In April, 1803, the squadron narrowly escaped being seriously weakened by the loss of the "New York." It was when this vessel was off Malta, on her way to Tripoli in company with the "John Adams" and the "Enterprise." The drums had just beat to grog; and the sailors, tin cup in hand, were standing in a line on the main deck waiting their turns at the grog-tub. Suddenly a loud explosion was heard, and the lower part of the ship was filled with smoke.

"The magazine is on fire," was the appalling cry; and for a moment confusion reigned everywhere. All knew that the explosion must have been near the magazine. There was no one to command, for at the grog hour the sailors are left to their own occupations. So the confusion spread, and there seemed to be grave danger of a panic, when Capt. Chauncey came on deck. A drummer passed hurriedly by him.

"Drummer, beat to quarters!" was the quick, sharp command of the captain. The drummer stopped short, and in a moment the resonant roll of the drum rose above the shouts and the tramping of feet. As the well-known call rose on the air, the men regained their self-control, and went quietly to their stations at the guns, as though preparing to give battle to an enemy.

When order had been restored, Capt. Chauncey commanded the boats to be lowered; but the effect of this was to arouse the panic again. The people rushed from the guns, and crowded out upon the bowsprit, the spritsail-yard, and the knightheads. Some leaped into the sea, and swam for the nearest vessel. All strove to get as far from the magazine as possible. This poltroonery disgusted Chauncey.

"Volunteers, follow me," he cried. "Remember, lads, it's just as well to be blown through three decks as one."

So saying he plunged down the smoky hatchway, followed by Lieut David Porter and some other officers. Blinded and almost stifled by the smoke, they groped their way to the seat of the danger. With wet blankets, and buckets of water, they began to fight the flames. As their efforts began to meet with success, one of the officers went on deck, and succeeded in rallying the men, and forming two lines of water-carriers. After two hours' hard work, the ship was saved.

The explosion was a serious one, many of the bulkheads having been blown down, and nineteen officers and men seriously injured, of whom fourteen died. It came near leading to a still more serious blunder; for, when the flames broke out, the quartermaster was ordered to hoist the signal, "A fire on board." In his trepidation he mistook the signal, and announced, "A mutiny on board." Seeing this, Capt. Rodgers of the "John Adams" beat his crew to quarters, and with shotted guns and open ports took up a raking position astern of the "New York," ready to quell the supposed mutiny. Luckily he discovered his error without causing loss of life.

For a month after this incident, the ships were detained at Malta making repairs; but, near the end of May, the "John Adams," "Adams," "New York," and "Enterprise" took up the blockade of Tripoli. One afternoon a number of merchant vessels succeeded in evading the blockaders, and though cut off from the chief harbor of the town, yet took refuge in the port of Old Tripoli. They were small lanteen-rigged feluccas of light draught; and they threaded the narrow channels, and skimmed over shoals whither the heavy men-of-war could not hope to follow them. Scarcely had they reached the shore when preparations were made for their defence against any cutting-out party the Americans might send for their capture. On the shore near the spot where the feluccas were beached, stood a heavy stone building, which was taken possession of by a party of troops hastily despatched from the city. The feluccas were laden with wheat, packed in sacks; and these sacks were taken ashore in great numbers, and piled up on either side of the great building so as to form breastworks. So well were the works planned, that they formed an almost impregnable fortress. Behind its walls the Tripolitans stood ready to defend their stranded vessels.

That night Lieut. Porter took a light boat, and carefully reconnoitred the position of the enemy. He was discovered, and driven away by a heavy fire of musketry, but not before he had taken the bearings of the feluccas and their defences. The next morning he volunteered to go in and destroy the boats, and, having obtained permission, set out, accompanied by Lieut. James Lawrence and a strong party of sailors. There was no attempt at concealment or surprise. The Americans pushed boldly forward, in the teeth of a heavy fire from the Tripolitans. No attempt was made to return the fire, for the enemy was securely posted behind his ramparts. The Yankees could only bend to their oars, and press forward with all possible speed. At last the beach was reached, and boats-prows grated upon the pebbly sand. Quickly the jackies leaped from their places; and while some engaged the Tripolitans, others, torch in hand, clambered upon the feluccas, and set fire to the woodwork and the tarred cordage. When the flames had gained some headway, the incendiaries returned to their boats, and made for the squadron again, feeling confident that the Tripolitans could do nothing to arrest the conflagration. But they had underestimated the courage of the barbarians; for no sooner had the boats pushed off, than the Tripolitans rushed down to the shore, and strained every muscle for the preservation of their ships. The men-of-war rained grape-shot upon them; but they persevered, and before Porter and his followers regained their ships, the triumphant cries of the Tripolitans gave notice the flames were extinguished. Porter had been severely wounded in the thigh, and twelve or fifteen of his men had been killed or wounded; so that the failure of the expedition to fully accomplish its purpose was bitterly lamented. The loss of the enemy was never definitely ascertained, though several were seen to fall during the conflict. On both sides the most conspicuous gallantry was shown; the fighting was at times almost hand to hand, and once, embarrassed by the lack of ammunition, the Tripolitans seized heavy stones, and hurled them down upon their assailants.

For some weeks after this occurrence, no conflict took place between the belligerents. Commodore Morris, after vainly trying to negotiate a peace with Tripoli, sailed away to Malta, leaving the "John Adams" and the "Adams" to blockade the harbor. To them soon returned the "Enterprise," and the three vessels soon after robbed the Bey of his largest corsair.

On the night of the 21st of June, an unusual commotion about the harbor led the Americans to suspect that an attempt was being made to run the blockade. A strict watch was kept; and, before morning, the "Enterprise" discovered a large cruiser sneaking along the coast toward the harbor's mouth. The Tripolitan was heavy enough to have blown the Yankee schooner out of the water; but, instead of engaging her, she retreated to a small cove, and took up a favorable position for action. Signals from the "Enterprise" soon brought the other United States vessels to the spot; while in response to rockets and signal guns from the corsair, a large body of Tripolitan cavalry came galloping down the beach, and a detachment of nine gunboats came to the assistance of the beleaguered craft.

No time was lost in manœuvring. Taking up a position within point-blank range, the "John Adams" and the "Enterprise" opened fire on the enemy, who returned it with no less spirit. For forty-five minutes the cannonade was unabated. The shot of the American gunners were seen to hull the enemy repeatedly, and at last the Tripolitans began to desert their ship. Over the rail and through the open ports the panic-stricken corsairs dropped into the water. The shot of the Yankees had made the ship's deck too hot a spot for the Tripolitans, and they fled with great alacrity. When the last had left the ship, the "John Adams" prepared to send boats to take possession of the prize. But at this moment a boat-load of Tripolitans returned to the corsair; and the Americans, thinking they were rallying, began again their cannonade. Five minutes later, while the boat's-crew was still on the Tripolitan ship, she blew up. The watchers heard a sudden deafening roar; saw a volcanic burst of smoke; saw rising high above the smoke the main and mizzen masts of the shattered vessel, with the yards, rigging, and hamper attached. When the smoke cleared away, only a shapeless hulk occupied the place where the proud corsair had so recently floated. What caused the explosion, cannot be told. Were it not for the fact that many of the Tripolitans were blown up with the ship, it might be thought that she had been destroyed by her own people.

After this encounter, the three United States vessels proceeded to Malta. Here Commodore Morris found orders for his recall, and he returned to the United States in the "Adams." In his place Commodore Preble had been chosen to command the naval forces; and that officer, with the "Constitution," forty-four, arrived in the Mediterranean in September, 1802. Following him at brief intervals came the other vessels of his squadron, — the "Vixen" twelve, "Siren" sixteen, and "Argus" sixteen; the "Philadelphia" thirty-eight, and the "Nautilus" twelve, having reached the Mediterranean before the commodore. Three of these vessels were commanded by young officers, destined to win enduring fame in the ensuing war, — Stephen Decatur, William Bainbridge, and Richard Somers.

Before the last vessel of this fleet reached the Mediterranean, a disaster had befallen one of the foremost vessels, which cost the United States a good man-of-war, and forced a ship's crew of Yankee seamen to pass two years of their lives in the cells of a Tripolitan fortress. This vessel was the "Philadelphia," Capt. Bainbridge. She had reached the Mediterranean in the latter part of August, and signalled her arrival by overhauling and capturing the cruiser "Meshboha," belonging to the emperor of Morocco. With the cruiser was a small brig, which proved to be an American merchantman; and in her hold were found the captain and seven men, tied hand and foot. Morocco was then ostensibly on friendly terms with the United States, and Bainbridge demanded of the captain of the cruiser by what right he had captured an American vessel. To this the Moor returned, that he had done so, anticipating a war which had not yet been declared.

"Then, sir," said Bainbridge sternly, "I must consider you as a pirate, and shall treat you as such. I am going on deck for fifteen minutes. If, when I return, you can show me no authority for your depredations upon American commerce, I shall hang you at the yard-arm."

So saying, Bainbridge left the cabin. In fifteen minutes he returned, and, throwing the cabin doors open, stepped in with a file of marines at his heels. In his hand he held his watch, and he cast upon the Moor a look of stern inquiry. Not a word was said, but the prisoner understood the dread import of that glance. Nervously he began to unbutton the voluminous waistcoats which encircled his body, and from an inner pocket of the fifth drew forth a folded paper. It was a commission directing him to make prizes of all American craft that might come in his path. No more complete evidence of the treachery of Morocco could be desired. Bainbridge sent the paper to Commodore Preble, and, after stopping at Gibraltar a day or two, proceeded to his assigned position off the harbor of Tripoli.

In the latter part of October, the lookout on the "Philadelphia" spied a vessel running into the harbor, and the frigate straightway set out in chase. The fugitive showed a clean pair of heels; and as the shots from the bow-chasers failed to take effect, and the water was continually shoaling before the frigate's bow, the helm was put hard down, and the frigate began to come about. But just at that moment she ran upon a shelving rock, and in an instant was hard and fast aground.

The Americans were then in a most dangerous predicament. The sound of the firing had drawn a swarm of gun-boats out of the harbor of Tripoli, and they were fast bearing down upon the helpless frigate. Every possible expedient was tried for the release of the ship, but to no avail. At last the gunboats, discovering her helpless condition, crowded so thick about her that there was no course open but to strike. And so, after flooding the magazine, throwing overboard all the small-arms, and knocking holes in the bottom of the ship, Bainbridge reluctantly surrendered.

Hardly had the flag touched the deck, when the gun-boats were alongside. If the Americans expected civilized treatment, they were sadly mistaken, for an undisciplined rabble came swarming over the taffrail. Lockers and chests were broken open, store-rooms ransacked, officers and men stripped of all the articles of finery they were wearing. It was a scene of unbridled pillage, in which the Tripolitan officers were as active as their men. An officer being held fast in the grasp of two of the Tripolitans, a third would ransack his pockets, and strip him of any property they might covet. Swords, watches, jewels, and money were promptly confiscated by the captors; and they even ripped the epaulets from the shoulders of the officers' uniforms. No resistance was made, until one of the pilferers tried to tear from Bainbridge an ivory miniature of his young and beautiful wife. Wresting himself free, the captain knocked down the vandal, and made so determined a resistance that his despoilers allowed him to keep the picture.

When all the portable property was in the hands of the victors, the Americans were loaded into boats, and taken ashore. It was then late at night; but the captives were marched through the streets to the palace of the Bashaw, and exhibited to that functionary. After expressing great satisfaction at the capture, the Bashaw ordered the sailors thrown into prison, while the officers remained that night as his guests. He entertained them with an excellent supper, but the next morning they were shown to the gloomy prison apartments that were destined to be their home until the end of the war. Of their life there we shall have more to say hereafter.

While this disaster had befallen the American cause before Tripoli, Commodore Preble in the flag-ship "Constitution," accompanied by the "Nautilus," had reached Gibraltar. There he found Commodore Rodgers, whom he was to relieve, with the "New York" and the "John Adams." Hardly had the commodore arrived, when the case of the captured Morocco ship "Meshboha" was brought to his attention; and he straightway went to Tangier to request the emperor to define his position with regard to the United States. Though the time of Commodore Rodgers on the Mediterranean station had expired, he consented to accompany Preble to Tangier; and the combined squadrons of the two commodores had so great an effect upon the emperor, that he speedily concluded a treaty. Commodore Rodgers then sailed for the United States, and Preble began his preparations for an active prosecution of the war with Tripoli.

It was on the 31st of October that the "Philadelphia" fell into the hands of the Tripolitans, but it was not until Nov. 27 that the news of the disaster reached Commodore Preble and the other officers of the squadron. Shortly after the receipt of the news, the commodore proceeded with his flag-ship, accompanied by the "Enterprise," to Tripoli, to renew the blockade which had been broken by the loss of the "Philadelphia."

It was indeed high time that some life should be infused into the war with Tripoli. Commodore Dale had been sent to the Mediterranean with instructions that tied him hand and foot. Morris, who followed him, was granted more discretion by Congress, but had not been given the proper force. Now that Preble had arrived with a sufficient fleet, warlike instructions, and a reputation for dash unexcelled by that of any officer in the navy, the blue-jackets looked for some active service. Foreign nations were beginning to speak scornfully of the harmless antics of the United States fleet in the Mediterranean, and the younger American officers had fought more than one duel with foreigners to uphold the honor of the American service. They now looked to Preble to give them a little active service. An incident which occurred shortly after the arrival of the "Constitution" in the Bay of Gibraltar convinced the American officers that their commodore had plenty of fire and determination in his character.

One night the lookouts reported a large vessel alongside, and the hail from the "Constitution" brought only a counter-hail from the stranger. Both vessels continued to hail without any answer being returned, when Preble came on deck. Taking the trumpet from the hand of the quartermaster, he shouted, —

"I now hail you for the last time. If you do not answer, I'll fire a shot into you."

"If you fire, I'll return a broadside," was the reply.

"I'd like to see you do it. I now hail you for an answer. What ship is that?"

"This is H. B. M. ship 'Donegal,' eighty-four; Sir Richard Strachan, an English commodore. Send a boat aboard."

"This is the United States ship 'Constitution,' forty-four," answered Preble, in high dudgeon; "Edward Preble, an American commodore; and I'll be d—d if I send a boat on board of any ship. Blow your matches, boys!"

The Englishman saw a conflict coming, and sent a boat aboard with profuse apologies. She was really the frigate "Maidstone," but being in no condition for immediate battle had prolonged the hailing in order to make needed preparations.

On the 23d of December, while the "Constitution" and "Enterprise" were blockading Tripoli, the latter vessel overhauled and captured the ketch "Mastico," freighted with female slaves that were being sent by the Bashaw of Tripoli to the Porte, as a gift. The capture in itself was unimportant, save for the use made of the ketch later.

The vessels of the blockading squadron, from their station outside the bar, could see the captured "Philadelphia" riding lightly at her moorings under the guns of the Tripolitan batteries. Her captors had carefully repaired the injuries the Americans had inflicted upon the vessel before surrendering. Her foremast was again in place, the holes in her bottom were plugged, the scars of battle were effaced, and she rode at anchor as pretty a frigate as ever delighted the eye of a tar.

From his captivity Bainbridge had written letters to Commodore Preble, with postscripts written in lemon-juice, and illegible save when the sheet of paper was exposed to the heat. In these postscripts he urged the destruction of the "Philadelphia." Lieut. Stephen Decatur, in command of the "Enterprise," eagerly seconded these proposals, and proposed to cut into the port with the "Enterprise," and undertake the destruction of the captured ship. Lieut.-Commander Stewart of the "Nautilus" made the same proposition; but Preble rejected both, not wishing to imperil a man-of-war on so hazardous an adventure.

The commodore, however, had a project of his own which he communicated to Decatur, and in which that adventurous sailor heartily joined. This plan was to convert the captured ketch into a man-of-war, man her with volunteers, and with her attempt the perilous adventure of the destruction of the "Philadelphia." The project once broached was quickly carried into effect. The ketch was taken into the service, and named the "Intrepid." News of the expedition spread throughout the squadron, and many officers eagerly volunteered their services. When the time was near at hand, Decatur called the crew of the "Enterprise" together, told them of the plan of the proposed expedition, pointed out its dangers, and called for volunteers. Every man and boy on the vessel stepped forward, and begged to be taken. Decatur chose sixty-two picked men, and was about to leave the deck, when his steps were arrested by a young boy who begged hard to be taken.

"Why do you want to go, Jack?" asked the commodore.

"Well, sir," said Jack, "you see, I'd kinder like to see the country."

The oddity of the boy's reason struck Decatur's fancy, and he told Jack to report with the rest.

On the night of Feb. 3, 1804, the "Intrepid," accompanied by the "Siren," parted company with the rest of the fleet, and made for Tripoli. The voyage was stormy and fatiguing. More than seventy men were cooped up in the little ketch, which had quarters scarcely for a score. The provisions which had been put aboard were in bad condition, so that after the second day they had only bread and water upon which to live. When they had reached the entrance to the harbor of Tripoli, they were driven back by the fury of the gale, and forced to take shelter in a neighboring cove. There they remained until the 15th, repairing damages, and completing their preparations for the attack.

The weather having moderated, the two vessels left their place of concealment, and shaped their course for Tripoli. On the way, Decatur gave his forces careful instructions as to the method of attack. The Americans were divided into several boarding parties, each with its own officer and work. One party was to keep possession of the upper deck, another was to carry the gun-deck, a third should drive the enemy from the steerage, and so on. All were to carry pistols in their belts; but the fighting, as far as possible, was to be done with cutlasses, so that no noise might alarm the enemy in the batteries, and the vessels in the port. One party was to hover near the "Philadelphia" in a light boat, and kill all Tripolitans who might try to escape to the shore by swimming. The watchword for the night was "Philadelphia."

About noon, the "Intrepid" came in sight of the towers of Tripoli. Both the ketch and the "Siren" had been so disguised that the enemy could not recognize them, and they therefore stood boldly for the harbor. As the wind was fresh, Decatur saw that he was likely to make port before night; and he therefore dragged a cable and a number of buckets astern to lessen his speed, fearing to take in sail, lest the suspicions of the enemy should be aroused.

When within about five miles of the town, the "Philadelphia" became visible. She floated lightly at her anchorage under the guns of two heavy batteries. Behind her lay moored two Tripolitan cruisers, and near by was a fleet of gunboats. It was a powerful stronghold into which the Yankee blue-jackets were about to carry the torch.

About ten o'clock, the adventurers reached the harbor's mouth. The wind had fallen so that the ketch was wafted slowly along over an almost glassy sea. The "Siren" took up a position in the offing, while the "Intrepid," with her devoted crew, steered straight for the frigate. A new moon hung in the sky. From the city arose the soft low murmur of the night. In the fleet all was still.

On the decks of the "Intrepid" but twelve men were visible. The rest lay flat on the deck, in the shadow of the bulwarks or weather-boards. Her course was laid straight for the bow of the frigate, which she was to foul. When within a short distance, a hail came from the "Philadelphia." In response, the pilot of the ketch answered, that the ketch was a coaster from Malta, that she had lost her anchors in the late gale, and had been nearly wrecked, and that she now asked permission to ride by the frigate during the night. The people on the frigate were wholly deceived, and sent out ropes to the ketch, allowing one of the boats of the "Intrepid" to make a line fast to the frigate. The ends of the ropes on the ketch were passed to the hidden men, who pulled lustily upon them, thus bringing the little craft alongside the frigate. But, as she came into clearer view, the suspicions of the Tripolitans were aroused; and when at last the anchors of the "Intrepid" were seen hanging in their places at the cat-heads, the Tripolitans cried out that they had been deceived, and warned the strangers to keep off. At the same moment the cry, "Americanos! Americanos!" rang through the ship, and the alarm was given.

By this time the ketch was fast to the frigate. "Follow me, lads," cried Decatur, and sprang for the chain-plates of the "Philadelphia." Clinging there, he renewed his order to board; and the men sprang to their feet, and were soon clambering on board the frigate. Lieut. Morris first trod the deck of the "Philadelphia," Decatur followed close after, and then the stream of men over the rail and through the open ports was constant. Complete as was the surprise, the entire absence of any resistance was astonishing. Few of the Turks had weapons in their hands, and those who had fled before the advancing Americans. On all sides the splashing of water told that the affrighted Turks were trying to make their escape that way. In ten minutes Decatur and his men had complete possession of the ship.

Doubtless at that moment the successful adventurers bitterly regretted that they could not take out of the harbor the noble frigate they had so nobly recaptured. But the orders of the commodore, and the dangers of their own situation, left them no choice. Nothing was to be done but to set fire to the frigate, and retreat with all possible expedition. The combustibles were brought from the ketch, and piled about the frigate, and lighted. So quickly was the work done, and so rapidly did the flames spread, that the people who lit the fires in the storerooms and cockpit had scarce time to get on deck before their retreat was cut off by the flames. Before the ketch could be cast off from the sides of the frigate, the flames came pouring out of the port-holes, and flaming sparks fell aboard the smaller vessel, so that the ammunition which lay piled amidships was in grave danger of being exploded. Axes and cutlasses were swung with a will; and soon the bonds which held the two vessels together were cut, and the ketch was pushed off. Then the blue-jackets bent to their sweeps, and soon the "Intrepid" was under good headway.

"Now, lads," cried Decatur, "give them three cheers."

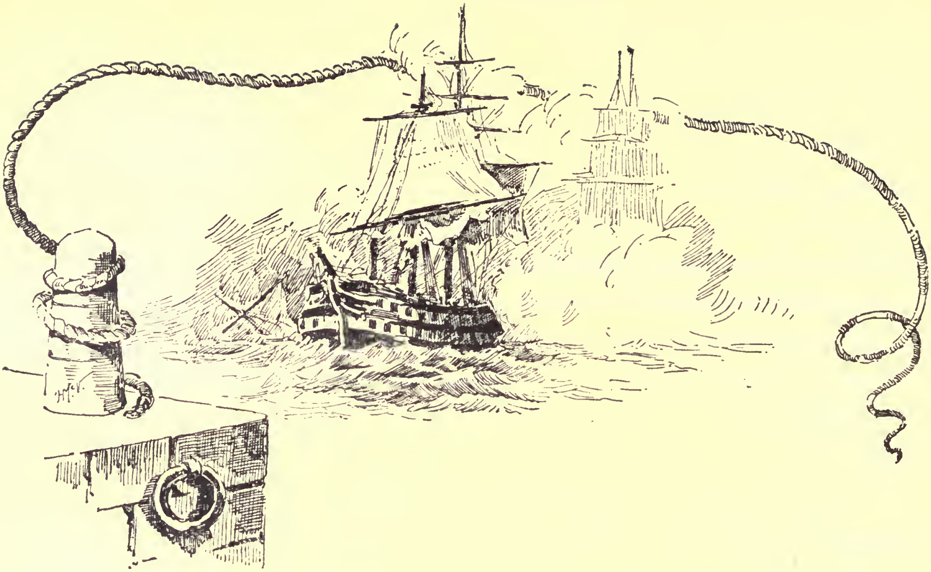
And the jackies responded with ringing cheers, that mingled with the roar of the flames that now had the frame of the "Philadelphia" in their control. Then they grasped their sweeps again, and the little vessel glided away through a hail of grape and round shot from the Tripolitan batteries and men-of-war. Though the whistle of the missiles was incessant, and the splash of round-shot striking the water could be heard on every side, no one in the boat was hurt; and the only shot that touched the ketch went harmlessly through her mainsail. As they pulled away, they saw the flames catch the rigging of the "Philadelphia," and run high up the masts. Then the hatchways were burst open, and great gusts of flame leaped out. The shotted guns of the frigate were discharged in quick succession; one battery sending its iron messengers into the streets of Tripoli, while the guns on the other side bore upon Fort English. The angry glare of the flames, and the flash of the cannon, lighted up the bay;

while the thunders of the cannonade, and the cries of the Tripolitans, told of the storm that was raging.

The ruddy light of the burning ship bore good news to two anxious parties of Decatur's friends. Capt. Bainbridge and the other American officers whom the Tripolitans had captured with the "Philadelphia" were imprisoned in a tower looking out upon the bay. The rapid thunder of the cannonade on this eventful night awakened them; and they rushed to their windows, to see the "Philadelphia," the Bashaw's boasted prize, in flames. Right lustily they added their cheers to the general tumult, nor ceased their demonstrations of joy until a surly guard came and ordered them from the windows.

Far out to sea another band of watchers hailed the light of the conflagration with joy. The "Siren" had gone into the offing when the "Intrepid" entered the harbor, and there awaited with intense anxiety the outcome of the adventure. After an hour's suspense, a rocket was seen to mount into the sky, and burst over Tripoli. It was the signal of success agreed upon. Boats were quickly lowered, and sent to the harbor's mouth to meet and cover the retreat of the returning party. Hardly had they left the side of the ship, when the red light in the sky told that the "Philadelphia" was burning; and an hour later Decatur himself sprang over the taffrail, and proudly announced his victory.

Not a man had been lost in the whole affair. As the expedition had been perfect in conception, so it was perfect in execution. The adventure became the talk of all Europe. Lord Nelson, England's greatest admiral, said of it, "It was the most bold and daring act of the ages." And when the news reached the United States, Decatur, despite his youth, was made a captain.

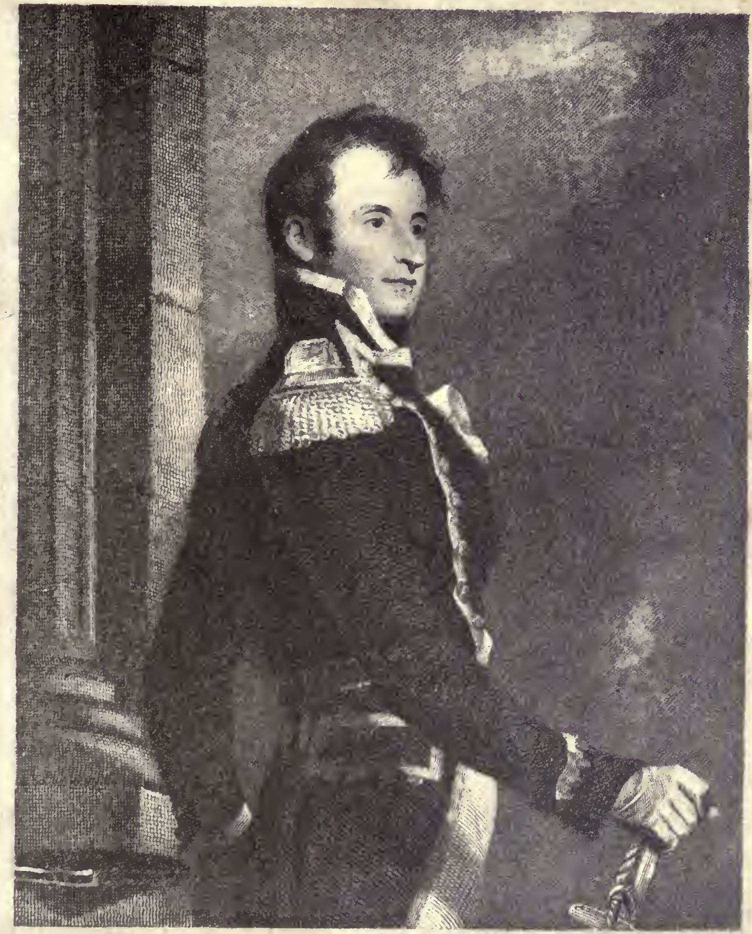


CHAPTER XVII.

A STIRRING YEAR. — THE BOMBARDMENT OF TRIPOLI. — DECATUR'S HAND-TO-HAND FIGHT. — LIEUT. TRIPPE'S BRAVERY. — LIEUT. SPENCE'S BOLD DEED. — SOMERS'S NARROW ESCAPE. — THE FLOATING MINE. — THE FATAL EXPLOSION. — CLOSE OF THE WAR. — THE END.

DECATUR'S brilliant exploit set the key-note for the year 1804; and, for the remainder of that year, the Americans carried on the war with no less spirit and dash. A high degree of daring had been infused into the men by so notable an example; and long before the year was out, the blue-jackets began to consider themselves invincible, and were ready to undertake any exploit for which their services might be required.

The lesser events of the year, we must pass over hastily. The maintenance of the blockade of Tripoli led to one or two slight actions, and an occasional capture of little consequence. Thus, in March, the "Siren" captured the "Transfer," privateer, which was trying to run the blockade. A month or two later, a coasting felucca, loaded with supplies, was chased ashore near Tripoli, and two boats' crews were sent to take possession of her. The Tripolitans, as usual, sent out a body of cavalry to protect the felucca, and the Americans were driven off. Thereupon the American blockading squadron took up a position within range, and threw solid shot into the felucca until she was a



[illegible] A.B. Durand from a Copy by James Herring.

STEPHEN DECATUR

Stephen Decatur

COMMODORE DECATUR

complete wreck. Nor did the Tripolitan cavalry escape without a shot or two.

But while the smaller vessels of the Mediterranean squadron were enforcing the blockade before Tripoli, Commodore Preble, with the flag-ship and the larger vessels, was at Malta preparing for a vigorous attack upon the city of the Bashaw itself. He had added to the fleet he had brought with him from the United States two bomb-vessels and six gunboats. He had also added somewhat to the armament of the "Constitution," and now proposed to try the effect upon Tripoli of a vigorous bombardment. By the 21st of July, the commodore was able to leave Malta with his fleet, fully prepared for active hostilities.

Tripoli was then defended by heavy batteries mounting a hundred and fifteen guns. In the harbor were moored nineteen gunboats, two galleys, two schooners, and a brig. The available force under the command of the Bashaw numbered not less than twenty-five thousand men. It was no pygmy undertaking upon which the Americans had embarked.

On the 31st of August, 1804, the first attack was made; and though only a bombardment of the town had been contemplated, there followed one of the most desperate hand-to-hand naval battles recorded in history.

It was a sultry midsummer day, and the white walls of the city of Tripoli glared under the fierce rays of a tropical sun. A light breeze stirred the surface of the water, and made life on the ships bearable. Before this breeze the American squadron ran down towards the town. All preparations had been made for a spirited bombardment; and as the Americans drew near the shore, they saw that the Tripolitans had suspected the attack, and had made ready for it.

The attacking forces formed into two lines, with the regular naval vessels in the rear, and the gunboats and bomb-vessels in front. As the vessels in the van were to bear the brunt of the battle, they were manned by picked crews from the larger vessels, and had for their officers the most daring spirits of the Mediterranean squadron. At half-past two the firing commenced, and soon from every vessel in the American line shells and shot were being thrown into the city of the Bashaw. The Tripolitan batteries returned the fire with vigor, and their gunboats pressed forward to drive the assailants back. At the approach of the Tripolitan gunboats, the Americans diverted their aim from the city, and, loading with grape and canister, turned upon their foes a murderous fire. Upon the eastern division of the enemy's gunboats, nine in number, Decatur led the four boats under his command. The advance of the enemy was checked; but still the Americans pressed on, until fairly within the smoke of the Tripolitans' guns. Here the boats were held in position by the brawny sailors at the sweeps, while the gunners poured grape and canister into the enemy. Fearfully were the Americans outnumbered. They could hope for no help from their friends in the men-of-war in the rear. They were hemmed in on all sides by hostile gunboats, more strongly manned, and heavier in metal, than they. They were outnumbered three to one; for gunboat No. 3, which had belonged to Decatur's division, had drawn out of the fight in obedience to a signal for recall, which had been displayed by mistake on the "Constitution." Then Decatur displayed his desperate courage. Signalling to his companions to close with their adversaries and board, he laid his vessel alongside the nearest gunboat; and in a trice every American of the crew was swarming over the enemy's bulwarks. Taken by surprise, the Turks retreated. The gunboat was divided down the centre by a long, narrow hatchway; and as the Yankees came tumbling over the bulwarks, the Turks retreated to the farther side. This gave Decatur time to rally his men; and, dividing them into two parties, he sent one party around by the stern of the boat, while he led a party around the bow. The Turks were dazed by the suddenness of the attack, and cowed by the fearful effect of the Americans' last volley before boarding. Their captain lay dead, with fourteen bullets in his body. Many of the officers were wounded, and all the survivors were penned into a narrow space by the two parties of blue-jackets. The contest was short. Hampered by lack of room in which to wield their weapons, the Turks were shot down or bayoneted. Many leaped over the gunwale into the sea; many were thrown into the open hatchway; and the remnant, throwing down their arms, pleaded piteously for quarter. Decatur had no time to exult in his victory. Hastily securing his prisoners below decks, and making his prize fast to his own vessel, he bore down upon the Tripolitan next to leeward.

While shaping his course for this vessel, Decatur was arrested by a hail from the gunboat which had been commanded by his brother James. He was told that his brother had gallantly engaged and captured a Tripolitan gunboat, but that, on going aboard of her after her flag had been struck, he had been shot down by the cowardly Turk who was in command. The murderer then rallied his men, drove the Americans away, and carried his craft out of the battle.

Decatur's grief for the death of his brother gave way, for the time, to his anger on account of the base treachery by which the victim met his death. Casting prudence to the winds, he turned his boat's prow towards the gunboat of the murderer, and, urging on his rowers, soon laid the enemy aboard. Cutlass in hand, Decatur was first on the deck of the enemy. Behind him followed close Lieut. Macdonough and nine blue-jackets. Nearly forty Turks were ready to receive the boarders. As the boarders came over the rail, they fired their pistols at the enemy, and then sprang down, cutlass in hand. The Turks outnumbered them five to one; but the Americans rallied in a bunch, and dealt lusty blows right and left. At last, Decatur singled out a man whom he felt sure was the commander, and the murderer of his brother. He was a man of gigantic frame; his head covered with a scarlet cap, his face half hidden by a bristly black beard. He was armed with a heavy boarding-pike, with which he made a fierce lunge at Decatur. The American parried the blow, and make a stroke at the pike, hoping to cut off its point. But the force of the blow injured the Tripolitan's weapon not a whit, while Decatur's cutlass broke short off at the hilt. With a yell of triumph the Turk lunged again. Decatur threw up his arm, and partially avoided the thrust; so that the pike pierced his breast, but inflicted only a slight wound. Grappling the weapon, Decatur tore it from the wound, wrested it from the Turk, and made a lunge at him, which he avoided. The combatants then clinched and fell to the deck, fiercely struggling for life and death. About them fought their followers, who strove to aid their respective commanders. Suddenly a Tripolitan officer, who had fought his way to a place above the heads of the two officers, aimed a blow at the head of Decatur. His victim was powerless to guard himself. One American sailor only was at hand. This was Reuben James, a young man whose desperate fighting had already cost him wounds in both arms, so that he could not lift a hand to save his commander. But, though thus desperately wounded, James had yet one offering to lay before his captain, — his life. And he showed himself willing to make this last and greatest sacrifice, by thrusting his head into the path of the descending scimetar, and taking upon his own skull the blow intended for Decatur. The hero fell bleeding to the deck; a pistol-shot from an American ended the career of the Turk, and Decatur was left to struggle with his adversary upon the deck.

But by this time the great strength of the Turkish captain was beginning to tell in the death-struggle. His right arm was clasped like an iron band around the American captain, while with his left hand he drew from his belt a short *yataghan,* which he was about to plunge into the throat of his foe. Decatur lay on his side, with his eyes fixed upon the face of his foe. He saw the look of triumph flash in the eyes of the Turk; he saw the gleaming steel of the *yataghan* as it was drawn from its sheath. Mustering all his strength, he writhed in the grasp of his burly foe. He wrested his left arm clear, and caught the Turk's wrist just as the fatal blow was falling; then with his right hand he drew fron his pocket a small pistol. Pressing this tightly against the back of his enemy, he fired. The ball passed through the body of the Turk, and lodged in Decatur's clothing. A moment later the Tripolitan's hold relaxed, and he fell back dead; while Decatur, covered with his own blood and that of his foe, rose to his feet, and stood amidst the pile of dead and wounded men that had gathered during the struggle around the battling chiefs.

The fall of their captain disheartened the Tripolitans, and they speedily threw down their arms. The prize was then towed out of the line of battle; and, as by this time the American gunboats were drawing off, Decatur took his prizes into the shelter of the flag-ship.

While Decatur had been thus engaged, the gunboats under his command had not been idle. Lieut. Trippe, in command of No. 6, had fought a hand-to-hand battle that equalled that of Decatur. Trippe's plan of attack had been the same as that of his leader. Dashing at the enemy, he had let fly a round of grape and canister, then boarded in the smoke and confusion. But his boat struck that of the enemy with such force as to recoil; and Trippe, who had sprung into the enemy's rigging, found himself left with but nine of his people, to confront nearly two-score Tripolitans. The Americans formed in a solid phalanx, and held their ground bravely. Again the two commanders singled each other out, and a fierce combat ensued. The Turk was armed with a cutlass, while Trippe fought with a short boarding-pike. They fought with caution, sparring and fencing, until each had received several slight wounds. At last the Tripolitan struck Trippe a crushing blow on the head. The American fell, half stunned, upon his knees; and at this moment a second Tripolitan aimed a blow at him from behind, but was checked and killed by an American marine. Rallying all his strength, Trippe made a fierce thrust at his adversary. This time the sharp pike found its mark, and passed through the body of the Tripolitan captain, who fell to the deck. His men, seeing him fall, abandoned the contest, and the Americans were soon bearing away their prize in triumph. But in the excitement of victory no one thought to haul down the Tripolitan flag, which still flaunted defiant at the end of the long lateen mast. So, when the prize came near the "Vixen," the American man-of-war, mistaking her for an enemy, let fly a broadside, that brought down flag, mast and all. Luckily no one was hurt, and the broadside was not repeated.

But by this time the wind had veered round into an unfavorable quarter, and the flag-ship showed a signal for the discontinuance of the action. The gunboats and their prizes were taken in tow by the schooners and brigs, and towed out of range of the enemy's shot. While this operation was going on, the "Constitution" kept up a rapid fire upon the shore batteries, and not until the last of the smaller craft was out of range, did she turn to leave the fray. As she came about, a shot came in one of her stern-ports, struck a gun near which Commodore Preble was standing, broke to pieces, and scattered death and wounds about.

When the squadron had made an offing, Preble hoisted a signal for the commanders to come aboard the flag-ship, and make their reports. He was sorely disappointed in the outcome of the fray, and little inclined to recognize the conspicuous instances of individual gallantry shown by his officers. He had set his heart upon capturing the entire fleet of nine Tripolitan gunboats, and the escape of six of them had roused his naturally irascible disposition to fury. As he stalked his quarter-deck, morose and silent, Decatur came aboard. The young officer still wore the bloody, smoke-begrimed uniform in which he had grappled with the Turk, his face was begrimed with powder, his hands and breast covered with blood. As he walked to the quarter-deck, he was the centre of observation of all on the flagship. Stepping up to the commodore, he said quietly, —

"Well, commodore, I have brought you out three of the gunboats."

Preble turned upon him fiercely, seized him with both hands by the collar, and shaking him like a schoolboy, snarled out, —

"Ay, sir, why did you not bring me more?"

The blood rushed to Decatur's face. The insult was more than he could bear. His hand sought his dagger, but the commodore had left the quarter-deck. Turning on his heel, the outraged officer walked to the side, and called his boat, determined to leave the ship at once. But the officers crowded about him, begging him to be calm, and reminding him of the notoriously quick temper of the commodore. While they talked, there came a cabin steward with a message. "The commodore wishes to see Capt. Decatur below." Decatur hesitated a moment, then obeyed. Some time passed, but he did not re-appear on deck. The officers became anxious, and at last, upon some pretext, one sought the commodore's cabin. There he found Preble and Decatur, sitting together, friendly, but both silent, and in tears. The apology had been made and accepted.

There is one humble actor in the first attack upon Tripoli, whom we cannot abandon without a word. This is Reuben James. That heroic young sailor quickly recovered from the bad wound he received when he interposed his own head to save his commander's life. One day Decatur called him aft, and publicly asked him what could be done to reward him for his unselfish heroism. The sailor was embarrassed and nonplussed. He rolled his quid of tobacco in his mouth, and scratched his head, without replying. His shipmates were eager with advice. "Double pay, Jack: the old man will refuse you nothing;" "a boatswain's berth;" "a pocket-full of money and shore leave," were among the suggestions. But James put them aside. He had decided.

"If you please, sir," said he, "let somebody else hand out the hammocks to the men when they are piped down. That is a sort of business that I don't exactly like."

The boon was granted; and ever afterwards, when the crew was piped to stow away hammocks, Reuben James sauntered about the decks with his hands in his pockets, the very personification of elegant leisure.

For modesty, the request of the preserver of Decatur is only equalled by that of the sailor who decided the battle between the "Bonne Homme

Richard" and the "Serapis." He had stationed himself on the yard-arm, and was dropping hand-grenades upon the deck of the "Serapis." At last a well-aimed grenade set fire to some powder on the enemy's ship, and virtually decided the day in favor of the Americans. When asked by Paul Jones what he would have as a reward for this great service, he suggested double rations of grog for the next week as the proper recompense. This he got, and no more.

But to return to the American fleet before Tripoli. Four days were spent in repairing damages, and on the 7th of August a second attack was made upon the town. The disposition of the American forces was much the same as on the occasion of the first attack, although the Americans were re-enforced by the three captured gunboats. The fighting was confined to long-range cannonading; for the enemy had been taught a lesson, and was afraid to try conclusions hand to hand with the Americans. About three o'clock in the afternoon, a tremendous explosion drew the gaze of every one to the spot where gunboat No. 8 had been anchored. At first only a dense mass of smoke, with the water surrounding it littered with wreckage, was to be seen. When the smoke cleared away, the extent of the disaster was evident. The gunboat had blown up. Her bow alone remained above water, and there a handful of plucky men were loading the great twenty-six-pound cannon that formed her armament. Lieut. Spence commanded the gunners, and urged them on.

"Now, lads, be lively," he cried. "Let's get one shot at the Turks before we sink."

Every ship in the squadron was cheering the devoted crew of No. 8. From every vessel anxious eyes watched the men who thus risked their lives for one shot. The water was rushing into the shattered hulk; and just as Spence pulled the lanyard, and sent a cast-iron shot into Tripoli, the wreck gave a lurch, and went down. Her crew was left struggling in the water. Spence, who could not swim, saved himself by clinging to an oar, while his men struck out for the nearer vessels, and were soon receiving the congratulations of their comrades.

In this attack, Richard Somers, a most courageous and capable officer, who a few weeks later met a tragic end, narrowly escaped death. He was in command of gunboat No. 1, and while directing the attack stood leaning against her flagstaff. He saw a shot flying in his direction.

Involuntarily he ducked his head, and the next instant the flying shot cut away the flagstaff just above him. When the action was over, Lieut. Somers stood by the pole, and found that the shot had cut it at the exact height of his chin.

After firing for about three hours, the American squadron drew off. Little had been accomplished, for the stone walls and fortresses of Tripoli were not to be damaged very greatly by marine artillery. The Americans themselves had suffered seriously. Their killed and wounded amounted to eighteen men. They had lost one gunboat by an explosion, and all the vessels had suffered somewhat from the Tripolitan fire.

That night the Americans were gladdened by the arrival of the frigate "John Adams," bringing letters and news from home. She brought also the information that re-enforcements were coming. Accordingly Preble determined to defer any further attack upon Tripoli until the arrival of the expected vessels. In the mean time he had several interviews with the Bashaw upon the subject of peace; but, as the Turk would not relinquish his claim of five hundred dollars ransom for each captive in his hands, no settlement was reached.

While waiting for the re-enforcements, Preble continued his preparations for another attack. The ships were put into fighting trim, munition hauled over, and repeated and thorough reconnoissances of the enemy's works made. It was while on the latter duty, that the brig "Argus" narrowly escaped destruction. With Preble on board, she stood into the harbor, and was just coming about before one of the batteries, when a heavy shot raked her bottom, cutting several planks half through. Had the shot been an inch higher, it would have sunk the brig.

By the 24th of August, Preble's patience was exhausted; and, without waiting longer for the expected squadron, he began an attack upon the town. On the night of the 24th, a few shells were thrown into Tripoli, but did little damage. Four days later, a more determined attack was made, in which every vessel in the squadron took part. Two of the enemy's gunboats were sunk; but with this exception little material damage was done, though the Americans chose the most advantageous positions, and fired fast and well. It was becoming evident that men-of-war were no match for stone walls.

During this engagement, the American fleet came within range of the Bashaw's palace, and the flying shot and shell drove that dignitary and his suite to a bomb-proof dungeon. One heavy shot flew in at the window of the cell in which Capt. Bainbridge was confined, and striking the wall, brought down stones and mortar upon him as he lay in bed, so that he was seriously bruised. But the American captain was in no way daunted, and the next day wrote in sympathetic ink to Preble, telling him to keep up his fire, for the Tripolitans were greatly harassed by it.

On Sept. 3, yet another attack upon the town and fortress was made. As in the foregoing instances, nothing was accomplished except the throwing of a vast quantity of shot and shell. Capt. Bainbridge, in a secret letter to Preble, reported, that of the shells he had seen falling in the city very few exploded, and the damage done by them was therefore very light. Preble investigated the matter, and found that the fuse-holes of many of the shells had been stopped with lead, so that no fire could enter. The shells had been bought in Sicily, where they had been made to resist a threatened invasion by the French. It is supposed that they had been thus ruined by French secret agents.

But, before this time, Commodore Preble, and the officers under his command, had about reached the conclusion that Tripoli could not be reduced by bombardment. Accordingly they cast about for some new method of attack. The plan that was finally adopted proved unfortunate in this instance, just as similar schemes for the reduction of fortresses have prove futile throughout all history. Briefly stated, the plan was to send a fire-ship, or rather a floating mine, into the harbor, to explode before the walls of the fortress, and in the midst of the enemy's cruisers.

The ketch "Intrepid," which had carried Decatur and his daring followers out of the harbor of Tripoli, leaving the "Philadelphia" burning behind them, was still with the fleet. This vessel was chosen, and with all possible speed was converted into an "infernal," or floating mine. "A small room, or magazine, had been planked up in the hold of the ketch, just forward of her principal mast," writes Fenimore Cooper. "Communicating with this magazine was a trunk, or tube, that led aft to another room filled with combustibles. In the planked room, or magazine, were placed one hundred barrels of gunpowder in bulk; and on the deck, immediately above the powder, were laid fifty thirteen-and-a-half-inch shells, and one hundred nine-inch shells, with a large quantity of shot, pieces of kentledge, and fragments of iron of different sorts. A train was laid in the trunk, or tube, and fuses were attached in the proper manner. In addition to this arrangement, the other small room mentioned was filled with splinters and light wood, which, besides firing the train, were to keep the enemy from boarding, as the flames would be apt to induce them to apprehend an immediate explosion."

Such was the engine of death prepared. The plan of operations was simply to put a picked crew on this floating volcano, choose a dark night, take the "infernal" into the heart of the enemy's squadron, fire it, and let the crew escape in boats as best they might.

The leadership of this desperate enterprise was intrusted to Lieut. Richard Somers. Indeed, it is probable that the idea itself originated with him, for a commanding officer would be little likely to assign a subordinate a duty so hazardous. Moreover, there existed between Decatur and Somers a generous rivalry. Each strove to surpass the other; and since Decatur's exploit with the "Philadelphia," Somers had been seeking an opportunity to win equal distinction. It is generally believed, that, having conceived the idea of the "infernal," he suggested it to Preble, and claimed for himself the right of leadership.

But ten men and one officer were to accompany Mr. Somers on his perilous trip. Yet volunteers were numerous, and only by the most inflexible decision could the importunate ones be kept back. The officer chosen was Lieut. Wadsworth of the "Constitution," and the men were chosen from that ship and from the "Nautilus."

As the time for carrying out the desperate enterprise drew near, Preble pointed out to the young commander the great danger of the affair, and the responsibility that rested upon him. Particularly was he enjoined not to permit the powder in the ketch to fall into the hands of the Tripolitans, who at that time were short of ammunition. One day, while talking with Somers, Preble burned a port-fire, or slow-match, and, noting its time, asked Somers if he thought the boats could get out of reach of the shells in the few minutes it was burning.

"I think we can, sir," was the quiet response.

Something in the speaker's tone aroused Preble's interest, and he said, —

"Would you like the port-fire shorter still?"

"I ask no port-fire at all," was the quiet reply.

At last the day of the adventure was at hand. It was Sept. 4, the day following the last attack upon Tripoli. The sky was overcast and lowering, and gave promise of a dark night. Fully convinced that the time for action was at hand, Somers called together the handful of brave fellows who were to follow him, and briefly addressed them. He told them he wished no man to go with him who did not prefer being blown up to being captured. For his part, he would much prefer such a fate, and he wished his followers to agree with him. For answer the brave fellows gave three cheers, and crowded round him, each asking to be selected to apply the match. Somers then passed among the officers and crew of the "Nautilus," shaking hands, and bidding each farewell. There were few dry eyes in the ship that afternoon; for all loved their young commander, and all knew how desperate was the enterprise in which he had embarked.

It was after dusk when the devoted adventurers boarded the powder laden ketch, as she lay tossing at her anchorage. Shortly after they had taken possession, a boat came alongside with Decatur and Lieut. Stewart in the stern-sheets. The officers greeted their comrades with some emotion. They were all about of an age, followed one loved profession, and each had given proofs of his daring. When the time came for them to part, the leave-taking was serious, but tranquil. Somers took from his finger a ring, and breaking it into four pieces, gave one to each of his friends. Then with hearty handshakings, and good wishes for success, Decatur and Stewart left their friends.

On the ketch was one man who had not been accepted as a volunteer. This was Lieut. Israel of the "Constitution," who had smuggled himself aboard. With this addition to his original force, Somers ordered sail made, and the "Intrepid" turned her prow in the direction of the Tripolitan batteries.

As far as the harbor's mouth, she was accompanied by the "Argus," the "Vixen," and the "Nautilus." There they left her, and she pursued her way alone. It was a calm, foggy night. A few stars could be seen glimmering through the haze, and a light breeze ruffled the water, and wafted the sloop gently along her course. From the three vessels that waited outside the harbor's mouth, eager watchers with night-glasses kept their gaze riveted upon the spectral form of the ketch, as she slowly receded from their sight. Fainter and fainter grew the outline of her sails, until at last they were lost to sight altogether. Then fitful flashes from the enemy's batteries, and the harsh thunder of the cannon, told that she had been sighted by the foe. The anxious watchers paced their decks with bated breath. Though no enemy was near to hear them, they spoke in whispers. The shadow of a great awe, the weight of some great calamity, seemed crushing them.

"What was that?"

All started at the abrupt exclamation. Through the haze a glimmering light had been seen to move rapidly along the surface of the water, as though a lantern were being carried along a deck. Suddenly it disappeared, as though dropped down a hatchway. A few seconds passed, — seconds that seemed like hours. Then there shot up into the sky a dazzling jet of fire. A roar like that of a huge volcano shook earth and sea. The vessels trembled at their moorings. The concussion of the air threw men upon the decks. Then the mast of the ketch, with its sail blazing, was seen to rise straight into the air, and fall back. Bombs with burning fuses flew in every direction. The distant sound of heavy bodies falling into the water and on the rocks was heard. Then all was still. Even the Tripolitan batteries were silent.

For a moment a great sorrow fell upon the Americans. Then came the thought that Somers and his brave men might have left the ketch before the explosion. All listened for approaching oars. Minutes lengthened into hours, and still no sound was heard. Men hung from the sides of the vessels, with their ears to the water, in the hopes of catching the sound of the coming boats. But all was in vain. Day broke; the shattered wreck of the "Intrepid" could be seen within the harbor, and near it two injured Tripolitan gunboats. But of Somers and his brave followers no trace could be seen, nor were they ever again beheld by their companions.

To Capt. Bainbridge in his prison-cell came a Tripolitan officer, several days later, asking him to go to a point of rocks, and view some bodies thrown there by the waves. Thither Bainbridge went, and was shown several bodies shockingly mutilated and burned. Though they were doubtless the remains of some of the gallant adventurers, they could not be identified.

The exact reason for this disaster can never be known. Many have thought that Somers saw capture inevitable, and with his own hand fired the fatal charge; others believed the explosion to be purely accidental; while the last and most plausible theory is, that a shot from the enemy's batteries penetrated the magazine, and ended the career of the "Intrepid" and her gallant crew. But however vexed the controversy over the cause of the explosion, there has been no denial of the gallantry of its victims. The names of all are honored in naval annals, while that of Somers became a battle-cry, and has been borne by some of the most dashing vessels of the United States navy.

It may be said that this episode terminated the war with Tripoli. Thereafter it was but a series of blockades and diplomatic negotiations. Commodore Barron relieved Preble, and maintained the blockade, without any offensive operations, until peace was signed in June, 1805. The conditions of that peace cannot be too harshly criticised. By it the United States paid sixty thousand dollars for American prisoners in the hands of the Bashaw, thus yielding to demands for ransom which no civilized nation should for a moment have considered. The concession was all the more unnecessary, because a native force of insurrectionists, re-enforced by a few Americans, was marching upon Tripoli from the rear, and would have soon brought the Bashaw to terms. But it was not the part of the navy to negotiate the treaty. That rested with the civilians. The duty of the blue-jackets had been to fight for their country's honor; and that they had discharged this duty well, no reader of these pages can deny.

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PART II

BLUE JACKETS OF 1812

BLUE-JACKETS OF 1812.

CHAPTER I.

THE GATHERING OF THE WAR-CLOUD. — THE REVOLUTION ENDED, BUT THE WAR FOR INDEPENDENCE YET UNFOUGHT. — OUTRAGES UPON AMERICAN SAILORS. — THE RIGHT OF SEARCH. — IMPRESSMENT. — BOYHOOD OF COMMODORE PORTER. — EARLY DAYS OF COMMODORES PERRY AND BARNEY. — BURNING A PRIVATEER. — THE EMBARGO. — WAR INEVITABLE.

ON a bright November afternoon in the year 1783, the streets of New York City, bordering on the bay, were crowded with excited people, pushing and elbowing each other rudely, and all pressing down to the water-side, where was collected a huge crowd, looking anxiously across the broad waters of the noble bay, to a spot where lay anchored a large squadron of ships. The taut cordage, the trimly squared yards, and the rows of cannon protruding from the open ports made it evident to the veriest landsman that many of the ships were men-of-war; while the scarlet flags crossed by the emblem of St. George, flaunting from the peak of every vessel, declared the allegiance of the fleet to the monarch of Great Britain, against whose rule the hardy Colonists had been for years waging a warfare, now to end in victory. Between the ships and the landing-place of old Fort George, that then stood where now extends the green sward of the Battery park, a fleet of long-boats was actively plying; the long, swinging strokes of the blue-clad sailors stamping them as men-o'-war's men beyond doubt. The landing-place was thronged with troops, whose glistening muskets, scarlet coats, gold trimmings, and waving plumes contrasted beautifully with the bright blue jackets of the sailors, as file after file of the soldiers boarded the boats, and were rowed away to the waiting ships. The troops drawn up on the shore formed long lines of scarlet against the green background of the bastions of Fort George. The men standing at rest talked loudly to each other of the coming voyage, and now and again shouted fiercely at some soberly clad citizen who strolled too near the warlike ranks; for had not all the sturdy citizens of New York come down to see the hated British evacuate the city, forced out by the troops of Gen. Washington (plain *Mr.* Washington, the British liked to call him)? The ragged gamins scurried here and there, yelling ribald jests at the departing soldiers; and the scarlet-coated troopers had hard work keeping down their rising anger, as suggestive cries of "boiled lobsters" rose on every side. Even the staid citizens could hardly conceal their exultation, as they thought that with those soldiers departed forever the rule of Great Britain over the Colonies. It was a quaint-looking crowd that had gathered that day, at the end of the little town. The sturdy mechanics and laborers, who were most numerous, were dressed in tight leather or yellow buckskin breeches, checked shirts, and flaming red flannel jackets. Their heads were covered with rusty felt hats, cocked up at the sides into a triangular shape, and decorated with feathers or bright buckles. On their feet were heavy leathern shoes, fastened with huge brass buckles that covered the entire instep. Here and there in the crowd stood a prosperous merchant or man of fashion, whose garb, if less rough than that of his humbler fellow-citizen, was no less odd and picturesque. At first sight, an observer might think that all the men of New York were white-haired; but a closer examination would show that the natural color of the hair was hid by dense layers of white powder. The hair was done up in a short cue tied by black ribbons, and on top of all rested a three-cornered cocked hat, heavily laced with gold or silver braid. The coat was light-colored, with a profusion of silver buttons, stamped with the wearer's monogram, decorating the front. Over the shoulders hung a short cape. The knee-breeches, marvellously tight, ended at the tops of gaudy striped stockings, which in turn disappeared in the recesses of pointed shoes adorned with gleaming buckles. The broad cuffs of the coat-sleeves were heavily laden with lead, to keep them in proper position.

DERELICT.

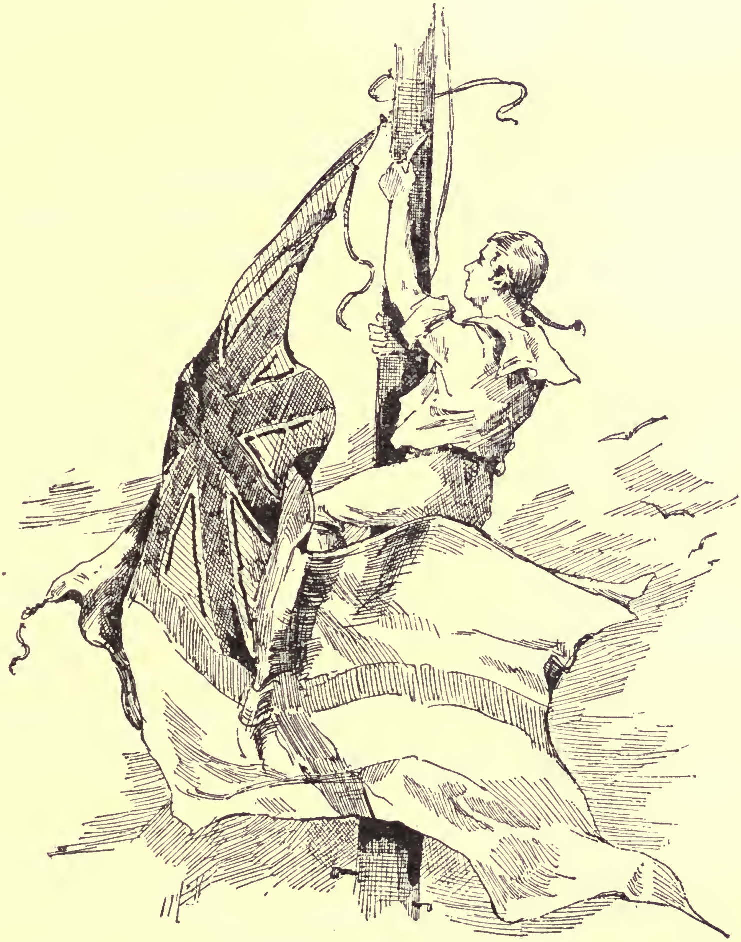
Such were the characteristics of the crowd that had assembled that day to witness the closing scene of British domination in America. Even as they stood there, they heard, faintly rising on the autumnal air, the sound of the fife and drum, as the American troops came marching down into the city, from their camp at the upper end of the island. And, as the last boat-load of grenadiers pushes off from the shore, the crowd, no longer restrained by the glittering bayonets, rushes down to the water's edge, and hurls taunts and gibes after the retreating boats, until the grizzled old soldiers curse the "Yankee rebels" fiercely, under their mustaches, and beg the officers to give them a volley.

Now the advance guard of the little American army, with fifes shrilling out the notes of "Yankee Doodle," comes marching down to the fort. No gay trappings, scarlet or gold lace about these soldiers, but ragged suits of homespun and homely flint-lock muskets, whose barrels are better burnished within than without. They march quickly to the water-front, and halt. The captain looks at the British squadron, now getting under way, and then, with true soldierly instinct, flashes a glance to the top of the flag-staff in the centre of the fort. His brow contracts, he stamps his foot, and the soldiers and citizens who have followed his glance break out into a cry of rage that rings far out over the placid waters of the bay, and makes the tough old British veterans chuckle grimly over the success of their little joke upon the Yankees; for there, high above the heads of the wrathful crowd, flaunting its scarlet folds over the roofs of the liberated city, floats proudly the BRITISH FLAG.

"Tear it down!" The cry rises hoarsely from a thousand throats; and the Colonial officer springs with glittering sword to cut the halliards, but finds them cut away already, and the flag nailed to the mast. Then a trim sailor-boy works his way through the crowd, and, grasping the pole firmly, attempts to climb up, but soon slides down ingloriously over the greasy surface, freshly slushed by the British before their departure. The crowd yells in wrathful impotence; and a few hot-headed youths spring forward, axe in hand, to bring down pole and all to the earth. But the firm hand of the commanding officer restrains them. He whispers a few words into their ears; and they start briskly away, followed by a dozen or two of the steadily growing crowd.

"Gen. Washington will be here soon," says the captain; "we must get that rag down at once."

In a few minutes the messengers return. They have been to a neighboring hardware store, and startled the gray-haired old merchant so that he stared vaguely at them through his spectacles, as they fiercely demanded hammers, nails, and wooden cleats. Loaded with these, they dash back to the scene of action; and again the sailor-boy becomes the hero of the moment. With his pockets filled with cleats, and his mouth stuffed with nails, he begins again his ascent of the slippery staff. He nails cleat after cleat upon the pole, and step by step mounts toward the top. At last he reaches the flag; and, with a few quick jerks, it is torn from the



CUTTING AWAY THE FLAG.

pole, and thrown contemptuously out into the air, to float down upon the crowd, and be torn to pieces by curiosity seekers. Then the halliards are lowered, and soon the flag of the young and struggling nation floats in the cool breeze; while from the neighboring heights the cannon of the forts speak in deep-mouthed salvos of applause, that mingle with the rejoicings of the people, and do not cease until the ships of the enemy have passed through the Narrows, and are out of sight and hearing. The British had evacuated New York, and America had won her independence.

Not many years, however, had passed after this memorable event, when the citizens not only of New York, but the people of all the United States, began to find out that America had not won her true independence, but merely a slight relief from the oppressions of Great Britain. Already the nations of Europe were beginning to encroach upon the rights and liberties of the infant nation. For this the States were themselves greatly to blame. Nobly as they had fought in unison to throw off the yoke of Great Britain, they fell into strife among themselves as soon as the war was at an end, and by their quarrels and bickerings led all the European nations to believe that the contentious Colonies, like the Kilkenny cats, would end by destroying each other. Such a nation could command little respect, and the stronger powers were not slow to show their contempt for the United States. American vessels, coming back to port, would report that a British ship-of-war had halted them in mid-ocean, and seized American sailors as suspected British deserters. Other American ships, sailing full of hope from American ports, would never re-appear, and their fate would be a mystery, until, after many months, some sailor wandering home told of his ship's capture by a French privateer or Tripolitan war vessel. For years a debasing tribute was paid to the Bashaw of Tripoli, upon condition of his granting to American ships the privileges of the sea, that are the undoubted rights of every nation; yet even this compact was more often ignored than observed. Small wonder was it that the sage old statesman, Benjamin Franklin, on hearing a young man speak of the "glorious war for independence," responded gravely, "Say rather the war of the revolution: the war for independence is yet to be fought."

In the year 1789, the States, after much debate and bickering, finally ratified the document known as the Constitution of the United States.

While the work of the American Revolution was thus being completed, and a new nation was being formed, events were transpiring on the other side of the Atlantic that were destined to affect gravely the growth of the new nation. The oppressed peasantry and laborers of France, smarting under the wrongs of centuries, rose in a mighty wave, and swept away the nobles, their masters. The royal head of King Louis fell a prey to the remorseless spirit of the guillotine, and the reign of terror in Paris began. Soon the roll of the drum was heard in every European city, and the armies of every nation were on the march for France. England was foremost in the fray; and the people of the United States, seeing their old enemy at war with the country of Lafayette, fired by generous enthusiasm, were ready to rush to the aid of their old ally. But the wise prudence of their rulers restrained them; and for the next twenty years the United States were neutrals, while all the nations of Europe were plunged in war.

The first effect of this condition of affairs was most beneficial. As neutrals, the ships of the United States could trade with all the battling peoples; while any vessel flying a European flag was sure to find an enemy somewhere on the broad seas, and suffer confiscation. While France was giving her farmers and mechanics to follow in the glorious footsteps of Napoleon, the industrious citizens of the United States were reaping a rich reward in trade with the warring nation. The farmers received the highest prices for their grain, the ingenious mechanics of New England reaped fortunes from the sale of their wares, and the shipyards were filled to their greatest capacity with the graceful frames of fast clipper vessels destined for the trade with Europe. In 1780 the shipping of the United States was confined to a few coasting-vessels, and the American flag was seldom seen beyond the Atlantic. Fifteen years later, the white sails of American ships dotted every sea, and but few European ports did not show some trim clipper floating in the harbor, bearing at her peak the stars and stripes.

From Maine to Georgia the people were building ships, and manning them. The vast forests resounded with the strokes of the woodman's axe, getting out the timber; and the seaport towns were given over to shipwrights, who worked day and night at their craft. In New England there sprung up a race of hardy seamen. Boys of twelve or fourteen ran away to sea, made a coasting voyage or two, and, after a voyage to some European port, became captains of ocean-going ships, — often before they were twenty years of age. The people of the coastwise towns of New England can tell of hundreds of such cases. There was "Nat" Palmer of Stonington, who shipped when a boy of fourteen, and, after four years' coasting, was made second mate of the brig "Herselias," bound around Cape Horn, for seals. On his first voyage the young mate distinguished himself by discovering the South Shetland Islands, guided by the vague hints of a rival sealer, who knew of the islands, and wished them preserved for his own trade, as the seals swarm there by the hundred thousands. The discovery of these islands, and the cargo of ten thousand skins brought home by the "Herselias," made young Palmer famous; and, at the age of twenty, he was put in command of a sloop, and sent to the South Seas again. One day he found his passage in the desired direction blocked by two long islands, with a narrow opening between them. To go around the islands would have been a long voyage; and the young captain headed his craft for the opening, but soon found himself on the rocks. Luckily, the vessel backed off, and the crew set about repairing damages. While thus engaged, the great, blunt head of a whale was seen in the narrow channel; and, after blowing a column of water high in the air, the monster swam lazily through the strait. "If a whale can go through that channel, I can," quoth "Cap'n Nat." And he forthwith did so. Quick of observation, and prompt of action, the sailors of the United States became the foremost seamen of the world, and guided their little vessels over every known sea.

But the growing commerce of the United States was destined to meet a series of checks, that seemed for a time likely to destroy it forever. England, jealous of the encroachments of the Americans upon the broad seas of which she had long called herself the mistress, began a series of outrages upon American ships, and, not content with acting in open hostility, incited the piratical rulers of Tripoli and Algiers to make war upon American shipping. In this volume it is not my purpose to tell of the means adopted by England to let the swarming ships of the Barbary pirates out of the Mediterranean Sea, to prey upon the vessels of the United States; nor do I intend to tell how, after peaceful arguments had been exhausted, Decatur and Preble, with a fleet of American vessels and a handful of fighting jack-tars, crossed the ocean, and thrashed the pirates of the Mediterranean into subjection. That may well be left for future consideration, and this chapter devoted to a history of the acts of insolence and oppression on the part of England, that finally forced the United States to declare war against a power so vastly superior to them in wealth, population, and military and naval strength.

The first great and crying outrage, protested against by the statesmen, the newspapers, and the people of the United States, was the so-called right of search. By this was meant the right claimed by every British man-of-war to stop an American vessel on the high seas, muster her crew on the forecastle, and seize and carry away any sailor thought to be a native of Great Britain. This outrageous act was committed time and time again by the commanders of British frigates, who knew no easier way of filling up a short-handed crew than by stopping some passing vessel flying the stars and stripes, and taking from her the best-looking sailors of her crew. Hardly a week passed without the arrival of a ship at New York, New London, or any of the shipping towns of New England, bringing some such tale. The merchant-vessel, skimming lightly over the ocean, at peace with all the world, and with nothing to fear save the terrors of the storms, against which the sturdy mariners knew so well how to guard, would be suddenly halted by a shot from a frigate of a nation with whom the United States had no quarrel. A hail from the frigate told the American to come up into the wind, while a boat was sent aboard. Soon a long-boat filled with man-o'-war's men, and with a beardless young midshipman in the stern-sheets, came dancing over the water; and in a minute or two a lieutenant, the middy, and a few sailors clambered aboard the wondering merchantman. There was small ceremony about the proceedings then.

"Muster your men aft," quoth the middy peremptorily; "and you'd better be quick about it, too."

Perhaps the American captain protested, — they generally did, — and talked about the peace between the nations, and the protection of his flag; but his talk was usually of little avail.

"Get those man aft, and be quick about it," orders the British officer. "You've got deserters from his Majesty's service in your crew; and I'll have them. Do you want me to send the boat back for the marines?"

The American crew came aft unwillingly, grumbling, and cursing his Majesty's service under their breath, and formed a line before the boarding officer. That worthy whispered a minute or two with the boatswain and sailors who came aboard with him, and then, pointing out one man, boldly claimed him as a British subject. American captains declared that the man so chosen was generally the most ship-shape sailor aboard; and indeed it seemed but natural that the English, in filling out their crew, should choose the best. Sometimes the American captain went on board the British ship, to protest against so summary a draft upon his crew. In such a case he was usually received with courtesy by the commander, but never did he regain his kidnapped sailors. The commander trusted in every thing to his first lieutenant, who boarded the merchantman; and that officer was thus made, in the words of an English journalist, "at once accuser, witness, judge, and captor."

The men thus pressed were expected to serve with all the zeal and bravery of regularly enlisted sailors. The slightest sign of hesitation or unwillingness was met with blows. A pressed man who refused to serve was triced up, and lashed with the cat-o'-nine tails until his back was cut to ribbons, and the blood spurted at every blow. Few cared to endure such punishment twice. Yet the sailors taken from the American ships lost no opportunity for showing their desire to get out of the service into which they had been kidnapped. Desertions from ships lying near the coast were of weekly occurrence, although recaptured deserters were hanged summarily at the yard-arm. Sailors who found no chance to desert made piteous appeals to the American consuls in the ports at which they stopped, or wrote letters to their friends at home, begging that something should be done to release them from their enforced service. It was not the severity of man-o'-war discipline that so troubled the poor fellows: many of them were old man-o'-war's men, and all would have been glad of berths in the United States navy; but the sight of the red flag of Great Britain waving above their heads, and the thought that they were serving a nation with which their country had just fought a bloody war, were intolerable.

One "pressed man," on a British ship lying in the West Indies, managed to write the following letter to a newspaper editor in New York, and, after much planning, succeeded in mailing it.

Port Royal, Jamaica, June 30, 1811.

Mr. Snowden, — I hope you will be so good as to publish these few lines. I, Edwin Bouldin, was impressed out of the barque "Columbus" of Elizabeth City, and was carried on board his Britannic Majesty's brig "Rhodian," in Montego Bay, commanded by Capt. Mowbary. He told me my protection was of no consequence, and he would have me whether or not. I was born in Baltimore, and served my time with Messrs. Smith & Buchanan. I hope my friends will do something for me to get my clearance; for I do not like to serve any other country but my own, which I am willing to serve. I am now captain of the forecastle, and stationed captain of a gun in the waist. I am treated very ill, because I will not enter. They request of me to go on board my country's ships to list men, which I refused to do, and was threatened to be punished for it.

I remain a true citizen of the United States

EDWIN BOULDIN.

Pathetic letters such as this appear often in the columns of the newspapers published in the early part of this century, and are usually accompanied by petitions from the relatives and friends of the pressed man, begging that Congress take some action to secure American sailors from such outrages. But year after year the practice went on, and higher and higher grew the enmity between England and the United States. Among the sailors who suffered impressment at the hands of the British were many who afterward in the naval battles of the ensuing war won ample revenge from the nation that had so abused their liberties.

Most prominent of all these men was David Porter, who, from the humble station of a cabin boy on his father's ship in 1796, rose in twenty years to be commodore in the United States navy. The name of Porter is one famous in the naval annals of the United States; and probably there never existed a family in which the love for the life of a fighting jack-tar was so strong as among these representative American sailors. David Porter, sen., and Samuel Porter served the American Colonies dashingly upon the sea in the Revolution. Of David Porter, jun., we shall have much to say in this volume. Of his children the eldest, William D., rose to the post of commodore, United States navy, and died of wounds received in the civil war; Henry O. Porter was first lieutenant of the "Hatteras" when she sunk before the fire of the Confederate ship "Alabama;" Thomas Porter served in the Mexican navy; Hambleton Porter died of yellow-fever while a midshipman in the United States navy; Lieut. Theodoric Porter, U.S.A., was the first officer killed in the Mexican war; and Admiral David D. Porter, U.S.N., by virtue of his exploits on blue water and in the ditches and bayous back of Vicksburg during the civil war, now stands at the head of living naval officers.

But to return to David Porter. He was sixteen years old, when, in 1796, his father, having obtained command of a vessel in the West India trade, determined to take the lad to sea, that he might learn the profession of his ancestors. It was hardly a favorable time to inspire an independent boy with admiration for the life of an American merchant sailor. The United States had no navy to protect its merchant ships; and the British cruisers that scoured the ocean felt little hesitation about boarding the ships of the infant nation, and kidnapping such sailors as they might desire. Of this young Porter soon had evidence. While his ship, the "Eliza," was lying in the port of Jeremie in San Domingo, a British frigate came into the harbor, and dropped anchor near by. One morning the lookout on the "Eliza" saw a boat, manned by armed men, put off from the frigate, and steer for the American merchantman. The movement was quickly reported to Capt. Porter, who was too old a seaman not to know what it portended, and too plucky an American to submit willingly to any indignity. His preparations were quickly made; and by the time the frigate's boat came alongside, the crew of the "Eliza" were armed and ready to rush to the deck at the first alarm. Capt. Porter with his officers and son stood on the quarterdeck, and awaited with great dignity the arrival of the boat. Soon the British came alongside; and an officer in the stern-sheets announced that he was about to board the "Eliza," and demanded to search the vessels for deserters from the British service.

Capt. Porter replied that his was an American ship, and the British might board at their peril; for he was armed, and would resist the boarders to the last extremity. A great laugh went up from the boat alongside. A Yankee merchantman to resist British sailors, indeed! And the officer, without more ado, ordered his men to board. Hardly had the order passed his lips, than Porter's clear voice rang out, "Repel boarders!" and the crew of the "Eliza," armed with pikes and muskets, rushed upon their assailants, and drove them into the sea. Young Porter was not behindhand in the fight, but lent his boyish aid to the vindication of American sailors' rights. One man was shot down by his side; and Porter received his first baptism of blood in this encounter, which thus early rooted in his mind a detestation for the arrogance of the British, and a determination to devote his life to the cause of his seafaring countrymen.

On his second voyage, a year later, young Porter was destined to experience still further the hardships and ignominy which American sailors only too often encountered at the hands of the British. Once again the boy, now a first officer, was walking the deck of his vessel in a San Domingo port, when a boat's-crew from a British frigate came on board on the usual errand of impressment. This time the sturdy, independent spirit of the elder Porter was absent; and the captain of the American vessel basely permitted a portion of his crew, among whom was Porter, to be carried aboard the frigate, where they were to be kept until they agreed to enlist. Loaded with irons, they were thrust into "the brig," or guard-room of the frigate; but, though the case seemed hopeless, Porter gallantly refused to enter the king's service, and ceaselessly exhorted his comrades to stand firm against the commands of the British. Days passed, and still the frigate's crew was in no wise increased from among the obstinate Americans. The British captain lost patience, and commanded that all the prisoners be brought out on deck, triced up, and publicly flogged with the cat-of-nine tails, for "the bad example they set the crew of his Majesty's ship." The order was duly put into execution. The prisoners, still ironed, were brought up under a heavy guard, and taken to the gratings; but when young Porter reached the deck, and saw the ignominious punishment in store for him, he fought desperately with his guards, and, finally breaking away, ran below, and hid in some corner of the hold, from which the most careful search failed to dislodge him. The captain finally gave orders to leave him alone, saying, "He'll come out fast enough when he gets hungry." But the lad did not wait for hunger to drive him from his hiding-place. That very night he came from the hold, crawled stealthily across the deck, and dropped into the water, regardless of the sharks that abound in those tropic seas. A short swim took him to a Danish vessel, by which he was carried across the Atlantic. Only after many months of voyaging as a common sailor did the lad succeed in working his way back to his home.

Even this experience could not deter the young seaman from again seeking employment upon the billowy main, and for the third time he shipped upon an American merchantman. Again his course lay toward the West Indies, and again he was intercepted by the inevitable man-of-war. This time he was not so fortunate as to escape until after a month or more of captivity, during which time he was treated with the greatest cruelty on account of his persistent refusal to serve under any flag save that of his own country. At last he made his escape, and reached home. By this time he was naturally somewhat disgusted with the life of a sailor on an American merchant-vessel; and he cast about for an appointment to the navy, which he soon received. It is impossible to doubt that his three adventures with the British press-gang had much to do with the ardor and bravery with which in later days the young sailor, then elevated to the highest ranks, did battle with the enemies of his country. When, at the close of the War of 1812, the veteran naval officer looked back upon his record during that conflict, he could point to one captured British man-of-war and scores of captured British merchantmen as the measure of his retaliation for the wrongs done him as a defenceless American sailor-boy.

Oliver Hazard Perry, of whose famous victory over the British on Lake Erie we shall speak later, also was brought into conflict with the British in the days of the "right of search." His father, Christopher Raymond Perry, in command of the United States ship "Gen. Greene," was escorting an American brig freighted with a valuable cargo. Near Gibraltar they were sighted by a British man-of-war, which bore down quickly upon the two ships. Perry was an old and cautious naval officer; and, though peace reigned between his country and Great Britain, he no sooner saw an armed vessel approaching, than he put his vessel in trim for action, and sent the crew to the guns. Nearer and nearer came the great English man-o'-war; and, as she came within range, a puff of smoke burst from her bow-port, and a ball skipped along the water before Perry's unarmed convoy, conveying a forcible invitation to heave to. Perry at once made signal to his convoy to pay no regard to the Englishman; and, setting the American flag, the two ships continued on their way. But at this moment the breeze died away, and all three ships lay becalmed within easy range of each other. The British captain was not slow to take advantage of this; and a boat soon put off from his ship, and made for the American brig. This move Perry promptly checked by a shot from the "Gen. Greene," which so narrowly missed the boat that the crew thought it well to run alongside the American man-o'-war, and arrange the matter peaceably. As the boat came alongside the "Gen. Greene," the gangway was manned, and the British officer escorted with the greatest formality to Perry's presence.

He at once stated his purpose in attempting to board the merchantman; claiming that, by virtue of the right of search, he was entitled to visit the brig, and examine into the nationality of her crew.

"I deny the existence of any right, on the part of British vessels, to search any American vessel, except with the consent of the American commander," responded Perry; "and my shot was intended to warn you that you had received no such permission."

By this time the British vessel had come within hailing distance of the "Gen. Greene;" and the captain demanded why his boat had been fired upon, and was now detained. Perry responded in the same words with which he had answered the boarding-officer.

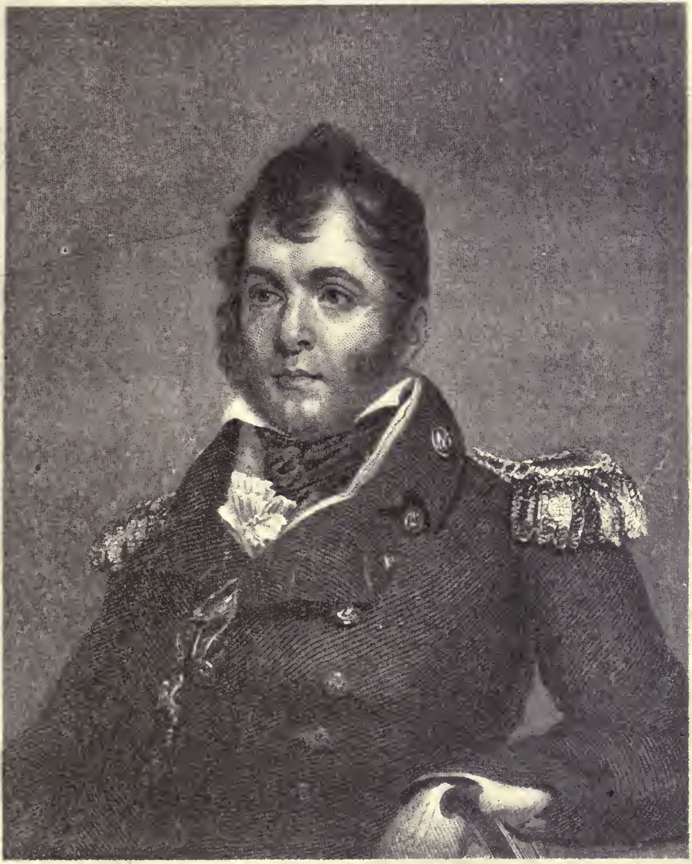
"It's a most surprising thing," shouted the Englishman, losing his temper, "if a British seventy-four-gun ship cannot search a pitiful little Yankee merchantman."

"By Heaven!" responded Perry. "If you were a ship of the first rate, you should not do it, to the dishonor of my flag." And in an instant the ports of the "Gen. Greene" were triced up, and the British captain saw that his adversary was prepared for battle. After a moment's thought, he abandoned all attempts at violence, and sent a courteous letter to Perry, begging leave to visit the brig in search of British deserters, which request Perry as courteously granted.

To this list of American seamen who suffered indignities at the hands of the British, and afterwards won reparation from their enemies in the War of 1812, may be added the name of Joshua Barney. Few Americans have given to their country a longer service or more efficient aid than he. In the little Colonial navy of the Revolution, he held high rank, and won the plaudits of older sailors. At the close of the Revolution, he served for a time in the merchant-marine; then entered the naval service of France, and, at the first news of war between England and America, returned to his country, to enlist under the stars and stripes. It was while he was in command of a merchantman that he was brought into collision with the British in a way that well might make the doughty old sea-dog doubt if the Revolutionary days, when he suffered in the noisome confines of Mill Prison, had not come again.

It was in the summer of 1793, that the good ship "Sampson," two days out from Cape François, West Indies, was slowly making her way northward, over the tropic seas, and under the glaring rays of the summer sun of the torrid zone. Capt. Barney and his crew were ever on the watch for danger; for, in addition to the hurricanes and typhoons common to the equatorial latitudes, much was to be feared from the lawless British privateers that then swarmed in the West Indies and Bermudas. That the "Sampson" was under the flag of a neutral power, was but little protection; for the commanders of the semi-piratical craft cared little for international law or for justice. War was raging between France and England; and a mere suspicion of traffic with French colonies was enough, in the eyes of these worthies, to condemn a vessel of any nationality.

Knowing his danger, Capt. Barney strove to avoid the localities frequented by the privateers, but to no avail One bright morning, the lookout reported three sail in sight from the masthead, and in a few hours Barney found himself hemmed in by privateers. Three officers boarded him, and began a rigid examination of the cargo and papers. Two finally expressed themselves as satisfied of the neutral character of the vessel; but the third exclaimed that he had discovered in the cabin an iron chest, full of money, which surely proved that the "Sampson" had something to do with the French, for "no blasted Yankee ever had iron chests or dollars on board his vessel!" Such conclusive proof as this could not be overlooked by the sapient privateers; and, after a little consultation, they informed Capt. Barney that they would let the ship go, if the money were given to them. As it amounted to eighteen thousand dollars, Capt. Barney looked upon this demand as nothing short of robbery, and indignantly refused to consider it; whereupon his captors took from the "Sampson" all her crew except the carpenter, boatswain, and cook, sent a prize-crew aboard, and ordered that she be taken to New Providence, a British naval station. The privateers were soon hull down on the horizon; and Barney found himself a prisoner on his own ship, exposed to ceaseless insolence from the British prize-master.



O. H. Perry

COMMODORE PERRY

Several days passed, as the "Sampson" lay becalmed in the tropics. Barney, though too old a sailor to be cast down by misfortune, nevertheless chafed under his situation. From prize-master and prize-crew he received nothing but scurrilous epithets; and the oft-repeated murmurs of "Rebel rascal!" "Yankee traitor!" "Blow out his brains!" and "Throw him overboard!" made it hard for him to believe the Revolution over, and the United States and England at peace. Even while they thus abused the captain, the rogues were feasting upon his provisions and drinking his wines; and only his firm refusal to give up his keys prevented their rifling his iron chest, and filling their pockets with his dollars. At last he began to feel that his life was no longer safe in the hands of his captors; and, though he had by him but three men of his original crew, he determined to attempt to recapture the ship.

One evening the captain managed to catch a few minutes' conversation with the carpenter and boatswain of his own crew, and broached to them the project for a recapture. No argument was needed to induce these bold men to embark in the perilous enterprise. Indeed, from the very moment of the capture, they must have cherished some such purpose; for each had hidden away in his bunk a gun and bayonet. Barney, on his part, had secreted a small brass blunderbuss and a broad-sword; and with this meagre armament the three determined to take the ship from its captors.

The success of the project then depended upon a favorable opportunity, and the three conspirators watched eagerly for the decisive moment to arrive. At last there came a day so squally that all the prize-crew were kept busy with the sails all the morning. Much exhausted, the sailors sat down to their dinner on the forecastle at noon, while the three British officers spread their mess amidships. Barney saw that the moment had arrived; and, giving the signal to his men, the plotters went below for their weapons. Barney was the first to re-appear, — the blunderbuss, loaded and cocked, in his hand, and the naked cutlass under his arm. Hardly had he stepped on deck when one of the officers saw him, and, throwing down dishes and dinner, sprang at the American and grappled with him. Barney struggled violently, and soon managing to get the blunderbuss against his enemy's shoulder, fired it, filling the wretch's arm and side with buckshot. Freed from his adversary, the gallant captain cut down with a blow of his cutlass the second prize officer, who was advancing upon him; and the third, seeing his two companions lying, drenched with blood, upon the deck, ran below. In the mean time the crew, startled from their dinner by the report of the blunderbuss, had rushed below for their weapons; but the last man had hardly dived down the hatchway when the wily carpenter and boatswain rushed forward, clapped on the hatches, and in a trice had the British sailors nicely cooped up in the forecastle. The two wounded officers were quickly cared for, and the unhurt fugitive secured; and Barney found himself again in control of the ship.

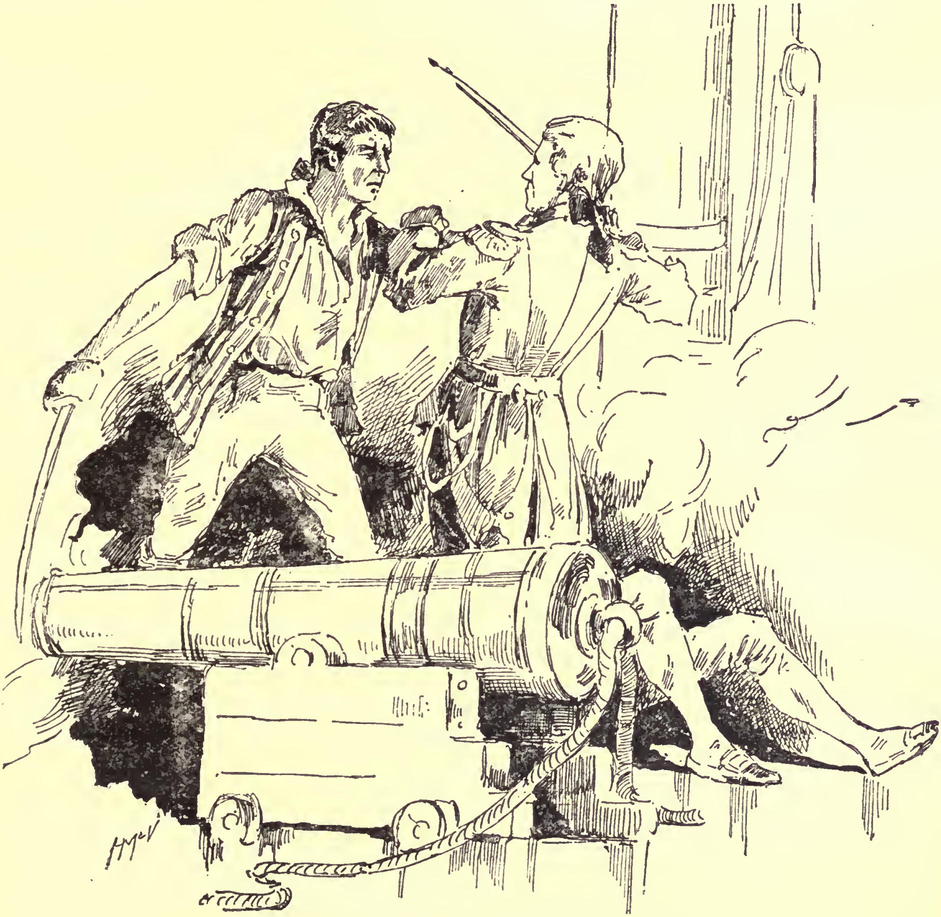
The victors then held a consultation as to their future action. They controlled the ship, it was true; but what were three men to do with a full-rigged ship on the stormy Atlantic? Clearly they must get aid from their captives, or all might go to the bottom together. Accordingly the three, with loaded weapons, went forward, and standing at the hatchway, proposed terms to the imprisoned sailors below. Capt. Barney acted as spokesman.

"You shall be released from confinement," cried he to the captives, "and may now come on deck one at a time, each one bringing his weapons with him."

The hatches were then thrown back, and the carpenter and boatswain stood with cutlasses and muskets ready to cut down the first who should make an offensive movement. The British saw the preparations for their reception, and came up one at a time as ordered. As each came up, his arms were seized and thrown overboard, and a gruff order given for him to go forward. Before long the crew, deprived of all means of resistance, were gathered on the forecastle. Barney then retired to the quarter-deck, and ordered that the crew be mustered before him.

"You are now my prisoners," said he; "and I have not only the power, but the right, to hang every man jack of you. You seized this vessel without any just cause, and simply because you were the stronger; and you have further used that strength to abuse and ill-treat me and waste my property. I do not propose to execute you, but will give you the choice of two alternatives. You may either stay with me and work this ship to Baltimore, there to be discharged with wages; or I will give you a small boat with provisions, and set you adrift to shift for yourselves. One condition I attach to the first alternative. If one of you is seen talking with his former officers, or if one man steps abaft the mainmast, he shall be instantly shot."

The crew wasted no time in deliberation, but decided to stay with the ship, and at once went forward on duty. Then began a fortnight of ceaseless watchfulness and grave anxiety for Capt. Barney. At night he never closed his eyes, but took his sleep by day in an armchair on deck, his blunderbuss and cutlass by his side, and a sentinel ready to awaken him at the slightest alarm. At last, however, he brought his ship safely to Baltimore, and discharged his crew. But the memory of



BARNEY REGAINS HIS SHIP.

that month of violence remained with him; and we shall hear of him again as a brave sailor in the service of the United States, and an uncompromising foe to England.

Among the most adventurous of American merchant seamen in the days following the Revolution was Capt. Thomas Macdonough. Like others of his class, his daring and ability as a navigator gained him a commission in the very small American navy of that time. On one occasion the United States ship "Siren," of which he was first lieutenant, was lying at anchor in the harbor of Gibraltar, surrounded by a number of merchantmen, from the peak of one of which floated the stars and stripes. While pacing the deck one bright afternoon, Macdonough observed a boat manned with armed men put off from a British man-of-war that rode at anchor a mile away. At once his suspicions were aroused, and with a strong glass he watched the movements of the British. As he had expected, the boat steered straight for the American merchantman; and through his glass Macdonough could see the boarders scramble over the bulwarks of the vessel, and soon thereafter return to their boat, taking with them a man dressed in the garb of a merchant seaman, and tightly bound.

The captain of the "Siren" was on shore; and Macdonough, as the officer in command, determined that so audacious an impressment should not succeed under the guns of an American war-vessel, small though she might be.

"Clear away the long-boat," he shouted; and the boat quickly was lowered to the water, and a dozen jackies grasped the oars. Macdonough sprung into the stern-sheets, and grasped the tiller.

"Let fall! Give way! Pull hard, men!" He gave the orders in quick succession, and laid his course straight for the British boat, which was soon overtaken He laid his boat alongside the British cutter, and demanded that the captive be given up. The English officer began to protest, but Macdonough cut his protests short.

"You have no right to that man. He is an American sailor. — Tumble in here, my man."

The pressed man, delighted with the prospect of rescue, sprang into the American boat; and before the British officer had recovered from his amazement sufficiently to offer resistance, the blue-jackets were pulling away toward the "Siren," with the long, swinging, man-o'-war stroke. When he reached his vessel, Macdonough retired to his cabin to await further developments, which were not long in appearing.

"Boat from the British frigate heading for the ship, sir," reported the officer of the deck, in a few minutes.

"Very good, sir. Have the gangway manned," returned the lieutenant.

The boat was soon alongside; and the British captain, white with rage, leaped to the gangway, and was shown to Lieut. Macdonough's cabin.

"How dare you take a man from a boat of his Majesty's ship, sir?" was his salutation.

"'Dare' is not a word to be spoken to an officer of the United States navy," responded Macdonough. "As for the man, he is a citizen of the United States; and I propose to protect him, at all hazards."

"I'll bring my frigate alongside, and sink your beggarly little craft," shouted the visitor, with a volley of oaths.

"That you may do," responded the American; "but while she swims the man you shall not have."

"You are a hair-brained young fellow, and will repent this rashness," cried the irate Briton. "Do you mean to say, that, if I had been in that boat, you would have dared to commit such an act?"

"I should have made the attempt, sir, at all hazards."

"What, sir!" shouted the captain, greatly enraged, "would you venture to interfere, if I should now impress men from that brig?"

"You have but to try it, sir," was the pithy response. And the British captain returned to his frigate, vowing all sorts of vengeance, but nevertheless did not again annoy the American ship.

While the popular clamor against the hateful right of search was still at its height in America, Great Britain unwisely added yet another outrage to the already long list of grievances complained of by the Americans. Notwithstanding the danger of Barbary pirates and British impressment, the merchants of the United States were carrying on a thriving trade with France. England, then at war with the great Napoleon, looked upon this commerce at first with disfavor, and finally with such intense hatred that she determined to put an end to it altogether. Accordingly, she issued the celebrated "Orders in Council," forbidding all traffic with

French ports. For such action the imperious nation had no authority by any principle of international law. Her blockade of the French ports was very imperfect, and easily evaded. It is a perfectly well-established principle of the common law of nations that a blockade, to be legal, must be complete and effective; otherwise, it is known as a "paper blockade," and neutral vessels are justified in attempting to evade it. Instead of posting blockading vessels at the entrances of French ports, to warn off all vessels, Great Britain contented herself with licensing hordes of privateers, that roamed the seas and snapped up vessels with little regard to law or justice. Hundreds of American vessels were thus captured; for our trade with France and the French West Indian colonies at that time was of vast proportions. The ocean soon became so infested with privateers that every American merchantman carried cannon, and an array of small-arms that would have done credit to a sloop-of-war. The New England sailors became able naval fighters, as well as experienced seamen; for a man shipping for a voyage knew well that, in addition to battling with the angry elements, he might be required to sight truly the great "long Tom," or beat back piratical boarders at the muzzle of the muskets. But even these heroic remedies could not save many a good ship.

Occurrences such as these fanned into flaming fury the smouldering fires of the American hatred for Great Britain. The people saw their old oppressor and enemy engaged in war with their old ally France, and the popular cry went up for a union of France and the United States against England. Happily, the statesmen of the time — Washington, Hamilton, and Jay — were too firm of purpose, and too clear-sighted, to be led away by popular clamor; and they wisely kept the United States Government in a position of neutrality between the two nations. Deep and loud were the murmurs of the people at this action. Could true-hearted Americans desert their friends in such a manner? Never! And so, whatever might be the policy of the rulers, the many-headed people welcomed French ambassadors, fêted the officers of visiting men-of-war, and hung the tri-color and the stars and stripes side by side on all public holidays.

It was in 1795, while the popular affection for France was at its height, that a merchant-vessel flying the British flag sailed into Boston Harbor, and made fast to the Long Wharf. Under her stern appeared the legend, "The Betsy of St. Croix;" her decks were littered with poultry and domestic animals, her cordage flapped loosely in the breeze, and every thing about her bespoke the merchant-vessel. Her captain, being hailed by the dock-loafers, and made the victim of the proverbial Yankee inquisitiveness, stated that he had just come from the West Indies with a load of lignum-vitæ, pineapples, and hides, which he hoped to sell in Boston. The self-constituted investigating committee seemed satisfied, and the captain strolled on into the city.

But the French consul at Boston was far from satisfied, and he took care to let his suspicions become generally known. "That innocent-looking merchantman is a British privateer," quoth he; "and it's a shame to harbor her in the good port of Boston, amid French-loving people." The consul's words spread like wildfire; and his suspicions soon passed for facts, without any supporting proof. No one knows who was the writer, or who the printer; but in a few hours the people upon the streets had thrust into their hands the following handbill: —

THIS NIGHT

Will be performed at the steps bottom of
Long Wharf

A COMEDY

of stripping the

BERMUDIAN PRIVATEER.

CITIZENS. Remember there have been near three hundred of our American vessels taken by these Bermudians, and have received the most barbarous treatment from those Damn'd PIRATES!!!

Now, Americans, if you feel the spirit of resentment or revenge kindling in your hearts, let us be united in the cause.

This was enough to rouse the turbulent people of Boston to action. They well remembered the winter's night, twenty-two years before, when their harbor was the scene of the first protest against the oppression of

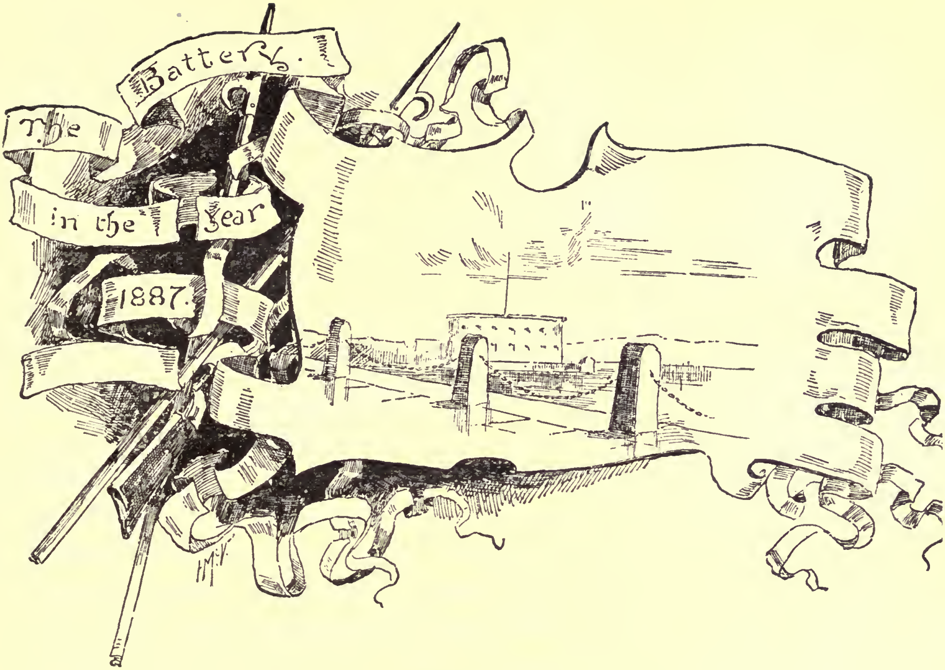
Great Britain. Then they threw overboard the tea, and spared the ships; this time ship and cargo alike should be destroyed. When night fell, small bodies of men could be seen marching down to the wharfs, through the narrow, crooked streets of the old town. Before eight o'clock Long Wharf was crowded with an angry mob. On the deck of the threatened vessel stood the captain, arguing and pleading with the crowd, and at times pointing to the scarlet flag above his head, and threatening his assailants with the wrath of mighty England. Argument, entreaty, and threats proved unavailing; and the crowd, gaining courage with numbers, rushed upon the vessel, and ordered captain and crew ashore. Leaving the scene, the captain rushed wildly into the city in search of the British consul; and, in his absence, the mob began to search his ship. An active and careful search soon brought to light in an out-of-the-way corner of the hold two swivel-guns, two three-pounders, forty charges of shot, fifteen pounds of powder, and eight muskets. All was piled upon the deck, and pointed out to the captain on his return, amid frantic yells from the enraged populace. He solemnly protested that the ordnance was only intended for purposes of defence against the pirates that infested the Bermudas. But the case was already judged. The people laughed at the captain's declarations; and in a few minutes the "Betsy," a mass of flame, was drifting across the harbor to the Charlestown beach. There she blazed away, while the crowd watched the bonfire from the dock, until the last timbers of the ship fell with a hiss into the black waters, and all was dark again.

Popular sympathy is at best but an unstable sentiment, and so it proved with this unreasoning affection of the American people for France. Firmly the American authorities held to their policy of neutrality, refusing to be influenced in the slightest degree by the popular clamor of the people for an alliance with France. Then the French sympathizers made their fatal error. In the presidential chair of the United States sat Washington, the hero of the Revolution. Rashly the French minister and his following began an onslaught upon this great and wise man, because of his firm determination to keep the United States neutral. They accused him of being an "aristocrat;" of wishing to found an hereditary monarchy, with himself at the head. No epithet was too vile for them to apply to him: "liar" and "traitor" were terms freely applied to him whom we regard as the veritable founder of our free Republic. Such intemperate and unreasoning malice as this had a very different effect from what was intended by the French sympathizers, or Republicans as the party was then termed. The party supporting the President gained strength and influence, even while the actions of Napoleon and the French Chamber of Deputies were giving American seamen the same grounds of complaint as those which Great Britain had so long forced upon them.

It was during the last year of the administration of Washington, that the French Directory issued secret orders to the commanders of all French men-of-war, directing them to treat neutral vessels in the same manner as they had suffered the English to treat them. The cunning intent of this order is apparent by its wording: "Treat American vessels as they suffer themselves to be treated by the British." What course does that leave open to the Americans, save to resist the British, thereby become involved in a war, and so aid France? But there was one other alternative; and, much to the surprise and chagrin of the French, the Americans adopted it. And the only effect of the diplomatic secret order was to embroil France in a naval war with the United States.

The condition of American commerce, after the promulgation of the French decree, became deplorable indeed. A merchant-vessel flying the American flag was never safe unless under the guns of an American war-vessel; and the reduction of the navy had made these few indeed. Should the brig "Nancy" or "Sarah Jane" put out from the little port of Salem or New London, she was certain to be overhauled by some British frigate, whose boarding officer would pick from the brig's crew a few able sailors, and leave her to make her way short-handed as best she might. Next would come along some French frigate or privateer, — some "Terreur," "Incroyable," or "Insurgente," — whose astute officers would quickly notice the gaps in the American crew, and, finding out that the brig had been boarded by the English, would declare her a prize for having given aid to the enemies of *la belle France*. Should the little brig be so fortunate as to escape the civilized belligerents, there were still the pirates of Tripoli, the picaroons of the French West Indies, and the unauthorized and irresponsible pirates, who, with forged commissions and flying the Spanish or Portuguese colors, ravaged the seas in all directions. The career of an American merchantman at that time is admirably told by our great novelist Fenimore Cooper in his sea-tale of "Miles Wallingford." The fate of the good brig "Dawn" was the fate of too many an American vessel in those turbulent times; and the wondrous literary art with which the novelist has expanded the meagre records of the times into an historical novel of surpassing interest makes an acquaintance with the book essential to a proper knowledge of American naval history.

The first act of retaliation on the part of the United States was the embargo ordered by Congress, which prohibited any vessel from leaving American ports. This action had two effects. It quickly brought about great distress in European countries, which even then relied much on the United States for food. This was the chief object of the embargo. The second effect was inevitable. The sudden check upon all foreign commerce plunged business in all parts of the United States into stagnation. Sailors out of work thronged the streets of the seaport towns. Farmers trudged weary miles beside their ox-teams, only to find, when they had hauled their produce to town, that there was no market for it. Along the docks the ships lay idly tugging at their cables, or stranded on the flats as the tide went out. Merchants discharged their clerks, and great warehouses were locked up and deserted. For nearly a year the ports were closed, and commerce thus languished. Then Congress substituted for the embargo the Non-intercourse Act, which simply prohibited commerce with France and England; and again the American flag appeared upon the ocean. But the two warring nations had learned neither wisdom nor justice, and began again their depredations upon the unoffending Americans. Envoys were sent to France to protest against the outrageous action of that nation; but they were told that no audience could be granted them, unless they paid into the French treasury two hundred and forty thousand dollars. This last insult was too great. The envoys returned home, told of their treatment, and the war party in the United States rallied to the defence of their nation's honor, shouting Pinckney's noble sentiment, "*Millions for defence, but not one cent for tribute.*"



CHAPTER II.

WAR WITH FRANCE. — THE BUILDING OF A NAVY. — FIRST SUCCESS FOR THE AMERICANS. — CUTTING OUT THE "SANDWICH." — THE "CONSTELLATION" AND "L'INSURGENTE." — THE "CONSTELLATION" AND "LA VENGEANCE."

WHILE France and England were waging a desperate and bloody war, the United States was like a shuttlecock, being struck repeatedly by the diplomatic battledores of each nation. Between the British "Orders in Council" and the French "Milan Decree," American commerce was in a fair way of being obliterated. To declare war against both nations, would have been absurd in so young a people; and for months, and even years, the fierce contests of political parties in the United States made a declaration of war against either aggressor impracticable. Now the Franco-maniacs were in the ascendency, and the country rang with praises of France, — the nation which had cast off aristocrats, and, like America, was devoted to republican principles; the nation which had aided the Colonies in their war for freedom. What though a French privateer did occasionally seize an American ship? The Americans alone were to blame for that; for was not their attitude toward England, their natural foe, enough to inflame the French? And were not the British aggressions more oppressive than those of France? War there must be, but let it be declared against the hated British.

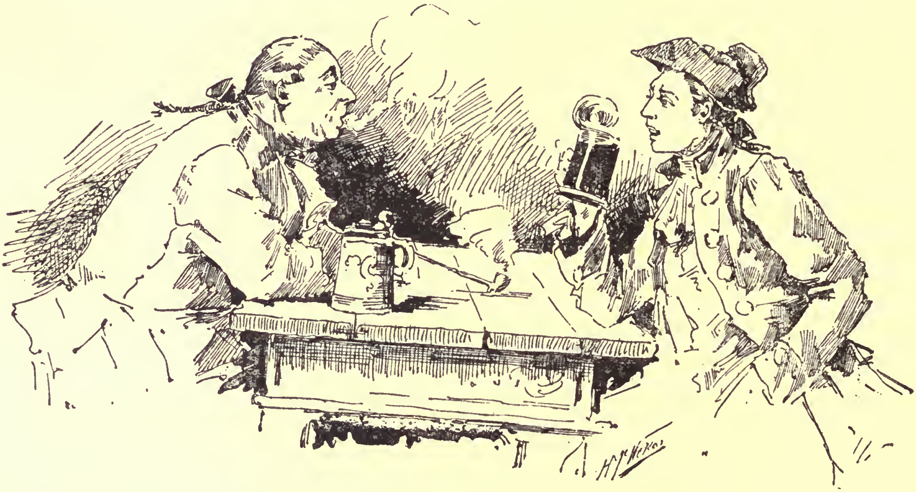
Such were the sentiments of the French sympathizers, or Democrats as they were then termed in political parlance. But the English sympathizers, or Federalists, held very different opinions. They made no attempt to excuse the offensive attitude assumed by England, but claimed that so soon as her war with France was over she would admit the injustice of her actions, and make due reparation for the injuries she had heaped upon American commerce. But they pointed out that for one vessel taken by England, ten were seized by French privateers, or piratical vessels of nondescript nationality, but bearing French papers. As for France loving republican principles, her republicanism was founded upon blood and the guillotine. She was no longer the nation that had aided the struggling Colonies. She was the nation that had foully murdered the kind king who had lent that aid two decades before. Besides these arguments, the Federalists did not scruple to hint, that, in a second war with England, the United States might lose the independence so recently won, while the navy of France was not so greatly to be dreaded.

Indeed, the American people of that day might well be excused for lethargy in resenting the insults of any first-class naval power. It is not too strong a statement, to say that at this time, when the need was greatest, the United States had no navy. At the close of the Revolution, the navy had been disbanded, the ships sold, and the officers dispersed among the vessels of the merchant marine. This fact alone is enough to account for the depredations of French, English, Portuguese, Tripolitans, and the hordes of pirates without a country. Is there no lesson in this? From this lesson of history cannot we deduce the rule that a nation with 6,000 miles of sea-coast, a republic hated by all monarchies, must maintain its sea-power if it would maintain its honor? The naval regeneration begun in 1893 ought not to be checked until the United States ranks next to Great Britain as a naval power.

But the depredations of the enemies of American commerce at last reached such a point that Congress could no longer overlook the necessity for an American navy. In March, 1794, Congress, after listening to a message from the President detailing the depredations of the Algerines, passed an Act authorizing the construction or purchase of six frigates, or an equivalent naval force. This was the beginning of the present United States navy; for some of the frigates built under that law are still afloat, although no longer exposed to the rude shocks of battle or the still more violent onslaughts of the mighty ocean.

In accordance with the law, the frames of six frigates were quickly laid upon the stocks at six different ship-yards; and even while the ribs were yet uncovered, commanders were selected for the unbuilt ships. The names of ships and officers alike are famous in American annals, and may well be mentioned here. The "Constitution," "President," "United States," "Chesapeake," "Constellation," and "Congress" were the vessels begun at this time; and the rolls of no navy of the world ever bore six more famous names. The captains chosen were John Barry, Samuel Nicholson, Silas Talbot, Joshua Barney, Richard Dale, and Thomas Truxton. Of these, all save Truxton had served the Colonies in the Revolution. Barney narrowly escaped being totally disowned by his country, because while holding a commission in the French navy he had once accidentally hoisted the American flag upside down. A cry went up from his enemies, that it was an intentional insult to the country; but his friends, with justice, pleaded that the flag had been wet, and a sailor, running it up to dry, had thus carelessly inverted it.

In the mean time the building of the ships went merrily on, until, when they were nearly finished, a disgraceful treaty was made with Algiers, and work on the new navy was neglected, and three of the unfinished ships sold. But in 1797 the French depredations became so unbearable that work was hastened; and cities and towns, not satisfied with the three frigates provided for, began collecting subscriptions for the purchase of ships, to be presented to the Government. The first of the frigates building by the Government to reach the water was the "United States." As the first vessel built by the United States under the Constitution, her launch was an event to be celebrated. At noon on the bright May afternoon chosen, the streets of Philadelphia leading to the ship-yard, where the hull of the great frigate lay upon the stocks, were thronged with holiday-making people. The sun had hardly risen, when anxious spectators began to seize upon the best points of observation about the ship-yard. The hour of the launch was set at one P.M.; and for hours before the crowd of watchers sung patriotic songs, cheered for Congress and the new navy, and anxiously debated the chances of a successful launch. The river was covered with pleasure-craft, decked with flags, and bright with the gay dresses of ladies. The great frigate, too, was a mass of bunting from stem to stern. At one precisely, the blows of many hammers were heard knocking out the blocks; and, after a moment's trembling pause, the first United States frigate glided swiftly into the water, and, after a graceful dip, rode buoyantly on the placid surface of the Delaware.


TOASTING THE WOODEN WALLS OF COLUMBIA.

While the ships were building, the war-feeling against France was steadily growing, and the enthusiasm of the people over the infant navy knew no bounds. Toasts to the "wooden walls of Columbia," and the "rising navy of America," were drunk with cheers at stately public banquets, and by bands of jolly roisterers at tap-houses. The patriotic song writer invaded the columns of the newspapers; and, as these could not afford space for all the poetic effusions, they were printed on broadsides, and hawked about the streets. At Harvard College the students made the chapel walls ring with the ode written by Joseph Story:—

"Shall Gallia's clan our coast invade,
With hellish outrage scourge the main,
Insult our nation's neutral trade,
And we not dare our rights maintain?
Rise, united Harvard's band,
Rise, the bulwark of our land."

Admirable as may be the patriotism of this ode, the poetry is not above criticism; but it is classic in comparison with many others. The following stanza and chorus will show the character of one of the most popular street-songs of the day:—

"Americans, then fly to arms,
And learn the way to use 'em.
If each man fights to 'fend his rights,
The French can't long abuse 'em.

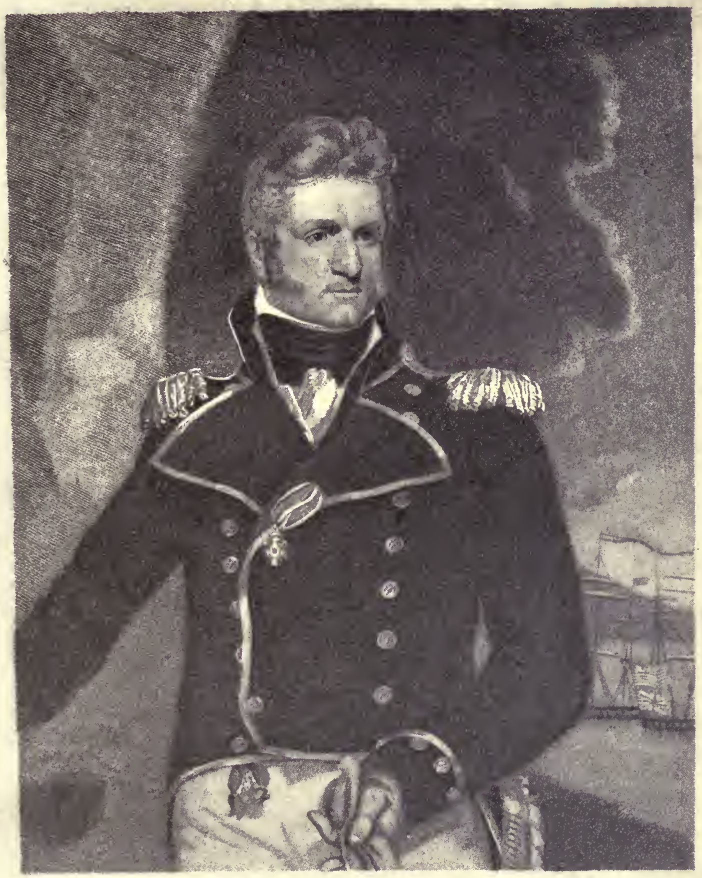
Yankee Doodle (mind the tune),
Yankee Doodle Dandy;
For the French there's trouble brewin':
We'll spank 'em, hand and handy."

From Maine to Georgia the mania for writing such doggerel spread with a rapidity only equalled by the avidity with which the people seized upon the songs, and sung them. A complete collection of these remarkable efforts of poetic art would form an amusing volume, and from it alone a history of political movements in the United States might be written. That even such wretched doggerel had its effect upon popular sentiment, cannot be doubted; for has it not been said, "I care not who makes the laws of a nation, let me but write its songs"?

But the manifestation of the growing ill-feeling towards France was not confined to poor but harmless poetizing. The first open rupture took place at Savannah. In the port of that city were lying two long, rakish schooners flying the French tricolor. Their decks were crowded with men, whose rough actions and brutal countenances showed them to be no respecters of law or order. It did not need the rows of cannon protruding from the ports, nor the carefully covered "long Toms" amidships, to indicate to the good people of Savannah that their harbor sheltered two French privateers. Among the seafaring people of the city, the sight of these two vessels aroused the greatest anger. Were they not representatives of the nation whose ships were seizing and burning American vessels in the West Indies almost daily? Perhaps these very vessels were then fresh from an action with some American ship. Who could tell that the holds of the privateers did not at that very minute contain the best part of the cargo of some captured American vessel? Probably the last shot fired from that "long Tom" had crashed into the side of some little brig flying the stars and stripes, and perhaps ended the career of many an American sailor. From suspicions and conjectures, positive statements soon grew. It was whispered about that the two privateers had recently plundered and burned a Yankee ship returning from the West Indies with a goodly store of specie in exchange for her cargo. Those cut-throat-looking Frenchmen were even then stained with the blood of true Americans. The money they threw on the bars of water-side dram-shops, in exchange for the vile rum which was the worst enemy of too many a good jack-tar, was looked upon with suspicion. "What Yankee's pockets did Johnny Crapaud pick to get all that money?" growled the American sailors.

The Frenchmen were not slow in discovering the dislike manifested by the people of Savannah; and like true soldiers of fortune, as they were, they did nothing to make friends of their enemies. They came ashore in troops instead of singly. Cutlasses hung at their sides. Their tight leather belts held many a knife or clumsy pistol. Their walk on the street was a reckless swagger; and a listener who could understand French could catch in their loud conversation many a scornful sneer or braggart defiance of the Americans.

Such a state of affairs could not long continue. Each party was ready and waiting to fight, and it was not hard to find an excuse. How the fighting began, no one ever knew; but one night the streets of the little city resounded with cries of rage and groans of agony Soon crowds began to gather; and sailors rushed up and down the streets, crying that the French desperadoes had killed three Americans. The rage of the populace, and particularly of the seafaring community, had no bounds. "Arm! arm! and take bloody vengeance upon the murderers," was the cry in all



THOMAS MACDONOUGH, U.S.N.

T. Macdonough

COMMODORE MACDONOUGH

quarters. The mob blocked all the roadways leading to the water-front. With cutlasses and guns they attacked the sailors on "L'Agile," which lay at a wharf, and drove them overboard. Once in possession of the ship, the enraged rioters vented their fury by cutting away the masts and rigging, tearing to pieces the woodwork of the cabin, and finally putting the torch to the battered bulk, and sending her drifting helplessly down the river. This summary vengeance did not satisfy their anger. They looked about them for the other vessel, "La Vengeance," and discovered that she had been towed away from the shore, and was being warped up stream to a place of safety. Boats were secured, and the irresistible mob set out in mad pursuit. A militia company, hastily sent to the scene of action by the authorities of the town, failed to check the riot; and, after a futile struggle on the part of her crew, "La Vengeance" shared the fate of her consort. Sympathy for France was well rooted out of Savannah then, and the cry of the city was for war.

Before the news of the uprising at Savannah was known in New England, the navy had struck the first blow against French oppression, and the victory had rested with the sailors of the United States. Congress had at last been aroused to a sense of the situation, and had issued orders to captains of American war-vessels, directing them to capture French cruisers wherever found. A number of large merchant-vessels and India-men had been armed hastily, and sent out; and at last the country had a navy on the seas. One of the first vessels to get away was the "Delaware," a twenty-gun ship, commanded by Stephen Decatur the elder. Decatur had been out but a few days when a merchantman, the "Alexander Hamilton," was sighted, from the halliards of which a flag of distress was flying. The "Delaware" ran toward the vessel, and sent a boat aboard, which returned, bringing the captain of the distressed craft. To Decatur the captain related the old story of French aggression, which had become so hateful. Only the day before, he said, his ship had been boarded by boats'-crews from a French privateer of twenty guns. The assailants, once on board, had eaten his provisions, and plundered his cargo without scruple. He gave careful directions as to the course of the privateer after leaving the "Alexander Hamilton," and returned to his ship happy in the thought, that, though he could not regain his plundered property, the thieves at least would be punished.

Decatur crowded on all sail, and set off in pursuit of the oppressor. Four hours later, the lookout forward reported four schooners in sight off the bow. For a moment the captain was puzzled, as he had no means of knowing which was the guilty privateer; but, after brief deliberation, he determined to adopt strategy. The rigging of his vessel was slackened, the yards slewed round, and every attempt made to transform the trim man-o'-war into a shiftless merchantman. Then the helmsman was instructed to carefully avoid running near the suspected schooners. The ruse succeeded admirably. The lookouts in the tops of the schooners reported an American merchantman in sight, but making attempts to escape. The cupidity of the Frenchmen was aroused. In the "Delaware" they saw only a defenceless ship, from which, by virtue of their strength, they could take whatever plunder they desired. From the decks of the "Delaware," the sailors could see the Frenchmen shaking out sail after sail; and soon one schooner, a perfect cloud of canvas, took the lead, and left her consorts far in the rear. It was the privateer they were after. The jackies of the "Delaware" clambered into the rigging, and set all sail, with the clumsiness of merchant-sailors; but, though the ship spread a large expanse of canvas, she was making but little progress, for two long cables dragged in the water astern, holding her back. The Frenchman came up gallantly, but suddenly discovered the ports along the side of the "Delaware," and concluded he had caught a Tartar. It was too late to escape then; for the "Delaware," coming about, had the schooner directly under her guns, and the Frenchman had no course left but to surrender. The privateer proved to be "Le Croyable," of fourteen guns and seventy men. Her captain was vastly astounded to hear that the United States had at last sent out cruisers against the French, who had come to look upon Americans as their legitimate prey. Keeping "Le Croyable" alongside, Decatur ran for Philadelphia, where he was received with unbounded enthusiasm. The captured ship was taken into the United States navy, under the name of the "Retaliation," and sent, under command of Lieut. Bainbridge, to cruise in search of other privateers.

But the career of the "Retaliation" under the American flag was neither long nor glorious. Ill luck seemed to attend the vessel in all her cruises, and Bainbridge wandered up and down the high seas without getting within range of a French cruiser or privateer. In November, 1798, the "Retaliation" was cruising, with two other men-of-war, in the West Indies, not far from Guadaloupe. One day three sails were made out to the eastward, and two more to the westward. Bainbridge thought that at last his opportunity had arrived; and the "Retaliation" set off to reconnoitre the strangers on the eastward, while the two other American ships made after the three sails in the opposite direction. As Bainbridge gained upon his chase, he concluded from their appearance that they were two English ships, and accordingly threw aside all caution, and sailed boldly alongside. Unluckily, they proved to be hostile French cruisers; and, when the discovery was made, the "Retaliation" was well within range. Every sail was set, and the ship put before the wind, to escape from the enemy, but too late. The leading ship of the enemy was a fine frigate; and she rushed through the water after the fugitive, like a dolphin after a flying-fish. Soon a heavy shot from one of the frigate's bow-chasers came whizzing by the "Retaliation," unpleasantly reminding the Americans that they were still within range, and their adversaries carried heavy metal. The second frigate soon opened fire, and the position of the "Retaliation" became hopeless. Her flag was unwillingly hauled down, and the vessel became again the property of its original owners. It is a strange coincidence, that this ship should have thus been the first prize of both Americans and French in the war.

The Frenchmen were not content with their success in capturing the "Retaliation:" so, while one frigate stopped to secure the prize, the other passed on in hot chase after "The Retaliation's" two former consorts, the "Montezuma" and "Norfolk." Bainbridge was taken aboard the French frigate "Volontaire," which then continued her course in the wake of her consort, the "Insurgente." For the captured American captain on the deck of the "Volontaire," the chase was one of great excitement. He well knew that the two stately French frigates were much more than a match for the flying Americans; and, should they overhaul the chase, the "Montezuma" and the "Norfolk" would join the "Retaliation" in French captivity. Racked with anxiety he paced the deck, trying in vain not to perceive that the pursuers were steadily gaining, and chafing under the position of helplessness in which he found himself. But an opportunity to help did unexpectedly present itself. The French captain, after a long look through his marine-glasses at the flying craft, turned to Bainbridge, and inquired, —

"What may be the force of your consorts, captain?"

Without a moment's hesitation, Bainbridge responded, —

"The ship carries twenty-eight twelve-pounders, and the brig twenty nines."

The Frenchman was astounded, as well he might be; for Bainbridge's answer was a most preposterous falsehood, nearly doubling the actual armament of the two vessels. An eager consultation was immediately held by the officers on the quarter-deck. Bainbridge looked on anxiously, and was delighted with the success of his ruse, when he heard orders for the hoisting of a signal which should call back the frigate leading in the chase. The signal was hoisted; and the "Insurgente," obeying, abandoned the chase, and returned. Her captain was indignant at his recall, and curious to know the cause of it. When told of Bainbridge's statement, he was furious; for his ship had been close enough to the chase to see that the Americans were small craft, utterly unable to cope with the two pursuing frigates. For his falsehood, Bainbridge was roundly abused, and many a French oath was hurled at his head. His action was indeed inexcusable by the rules of honor; and the utmost that can be said of it by the most patriotic American is, that by his falsehood he saved two good ships for the infant navy of the United States. From a military point of view, however, his conduct was commendable; and in recognition thereof, on his release from captivity, he was made commander of the "Norfolk," one of the vessels he had saved.

France and the United States were now actually at war, although no definite declaration of war had been made by either party. This fact made many French privateers assume an injured air, on being captured by United States ships, and complain that they had never heard of any declaration of war. With a Frenchman of this sort, Stephen Decatur the younger had an experience early in his naval career.

This occurred in February, 1799. The frigate "United States" was cruising near Martinique in that year, and to her young Decatur was attached as a sub-lieutenant. One morning a French privateer was sighted, and the frigate set out in hot pursuit. The privateer took the alarm quickly, and crowded on all sail, until her long, narrow hull slipped through the waves like a fish. The breeze was fresh, and the chase an exciting one; but gradually the immense spread of the frigate's canvas began to tell, and she rapidly overhauled the fugitive. The French captain was plucky, and even desperate, in his attempt to escape; for, seeing that he was about to be overhauled, he resorted to the expedient of a fox chased by hounds, and doubled, turning short to windward, and running right under the guns of the frigate. The move was a bold one, and might well have succeeded, had it not been for the good marksmanship of a gunner on the frigate, who promptly sent a twenty-four-pound shot (the only one fired in the affair) straight through the hull of the privateer, between wind and water. In an instant all was confusion on the French vessel. The water poured into her hold through the hole cut by the shot; and the hasty lowering of her sails, and the frantic howls for succor from the crew, told the people of the "United States" that their chase was at an end. The boats of the frigate were quickly lowered, and Decatur went in one as officer in command. When he reached the sinking ship, he found a scene too ludicrous to be pathetic. Along the rail of the vessel, from bow to stern, the Frenchmen were perched like birds. Many had stripped off all their clothes, in order to be prepared to swim; and from all arose a medley of plaintive cries for help, and curses on that unlucky shot. By skilful management of the boats, all were saved; and it happened that Decatur pulled into his own boat the captain of the sinking vessel.

Brushing the salt water out of his eyes, this worthy expressed great surprise that he had been fired upon by a vessel bearing the United States flag.

"Ees eet that that ees a sheep of les États-Unis?" he inquired, in the broken English that four years of cruising against Americans had enabled him to pick up.

"It is," responded Decatur.

"I am indeed sairprised. I had not thought that les États-Unis had the war with La République Française."

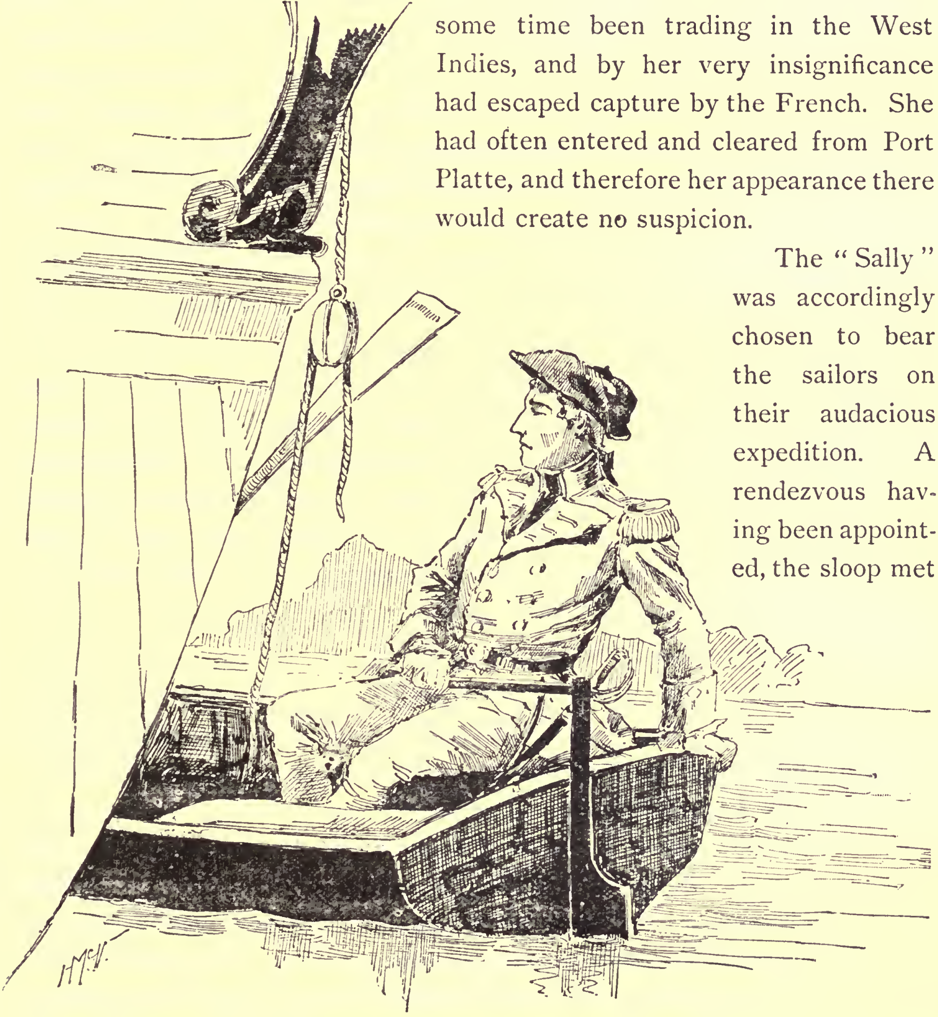
"No, sir," responded Decatur, thoroughly provoked; "but you knew that the French Republic was at war with the United States, that you were taking our merchant-vessels every day, and crowding our countrymen into prison at Basseterre to die like sheep."

This was more than the Frenchman could deny, and he was constrained to accept his capture with the best grace possible.

An audacious, but clearly illegal, exploit of the blue-jackets in this war, was the cutting out and capture of the French letter-of-marque vessel "Sandwich," as she lay in Port Platte, a small harbor on the Spanish side of St. Domingo. Commodore Talbot, who won a reputation for daring and recklessness in the Revolution, was cruising about on the San Domingo station, and had spent some weeks in monotonous voyaging, without an opportunity to capture a single prize. Word was brought to the squadron, that in the little harbor of Port Platte a vessel was taking in a cargo of coffee. From the description of the vessel, Commodore Talbot recognized her as a former British packet, the "Sandwich," now sailing under French letters of marque. Her known speed and seaworthy qualities made her too valuable a prize to be left in the hands of the enemy; and Talbot, without more ado, determined to capture her. The first difficulty that lay in the way was the fact that the vessel was under the protection of Spain, a neutral power. Talbot was no man to notice so purely formal an obstacle. He growled out a decided negative to all hints about respecting a neutral flag. Spain neutral, indeed! She might claim to be neutral, but her Picaroons were too often to be found among the French pirates to leave any respect for Spain's neutrality in the mind of a man of sense; and the "Sandwich" he was going to take, and on his own responsibility. This silenced all opposition.

Having arrived at the determination to take the "Sandwich," the next problem to be solved was, how shall she be taken? Obviously the first step was to make a careful reconnoissance of the ship and her defences. To Lieut. Hull of the "Constitution," this duty was assigned. One dark and stormy night Mr. Hull took one of the frigate's cutters, and, pulling into the harbor, carefully examined the situation. On his return, he reported that the "Sandwich" was stripped of her rigging, and lay directly under the guns of a small battery, built on shore for her protection. To sail in with the frigate, and capture the enemy by mere force of arms, would have been simple enough; but the object of the Americans was to take the ship without injuring her, in order that she might at once join the United States squadron. Strategy was therefore necessary.

It was accordingly determined to secure an American merchant-vessel, that could enter the port, and run alongside the "Sandwich," without arousing suspicion. Luckily at that very moment a craft turned up that filled the need precisely. This was the American sloop "Sally," a battered, weather-beaten little craft, that had for some time been trading in the West Indies, and by her very insignificance had escaped capture by the French. She had often entered and cleared from Port Platte, and therefore her appearance there would create no suspicion.



HULL MAKES A RECONNOISSANCE.

The "Sally" was accordingly chosen to bear the sailors on their audacious expedition. A rendezvous having been appointed, the sloop met the "Constitution" far out at sea; and a large body of blue-jackets and marines left the frigate, and took quarters on the clumsy little merchantman, which then laid her course for Port Platte. About midnight the lookouts on the "Sally" saw a vessel's lights near at hand; but, beyond reporting to the officer of the deck, they paid no heed to their neighbor. Suddenly, however, out of the darkness came a bright flash; and the hum of a heavy shot in the air above the "Sally" was followed by the dull report of a cannon. At the same time a blue light burned on the deck of the vessel from which the shot proceeded, showed her to be a powerful frigate. Then ensued a few moments of intense suspense for the little band on the "Sally." Should the stranger prove to be a French frigate, all was lost; but in that latitude English vessels were common, and possibly this might be one. Soon the regular thumping of oars in the tholepins, and the splashing of the waves against an approaching boat, could be heard; and in a few minutes a hail came from the black water alongside, and the dark figure of a man standing in the stern-sheets of a boat was seen. A rope was thrown him, by the aid of which he nimbly clambered aboard. An involuntary murmur of relief arose from the party on the "Sally," as by the dim light of the lanterns they saw that the officer wore a British uniform. The officer himself could not repress a start and exclamation of surprise as he saw a band of officers in naval uniform, and a large body of blue-jackets and marines, on the vessel which he expected to find manned by a half-dozen lanky Yankees, commanded by a down-east "skipper."

"Why, what ship's this?" he exclaimed in surprise, as he looked upon the armed men about him. Lieut. Hull, who was in command, explained to him the situation, and told him of the adventure that was being attempted. The officer seemed much disappointed, and told Mr. Hull that the British frigate was standing about outside the harbor, to capture the "Sandwich" as she came out; but the idea of so boldly setting at naught the principles of neutrality had not occurred to them. After a few minutes' conversation, the visitor returned to his ship, and the "Sally" proceeded on her errand. She reached the entrance to the harbor of Port Platte in the morning, and sailed boldly in. Most of the crew and the marines were hidden beneath the bulwarks, or sent below; so that the people on the "Sandwich" gave but a glance to the approaching vessel, until she ran so close to their vessel's bows that they feared an accident.

"Look out there, or you'll run foul of us!" shouted a mate from the deck of the "Sandwich; and, as if his cry was a signal, the helm of the "Sally" was put down, the vessel ranged up alongside, and in an instant a torrent of armed men poured over the sides of the surprised Frenchman, and drove the crew below. There was no resistance. The ship was captured in five minutes. The marines of the expedition had been sent ashore to spike the guns of the battery, and their work was performed with equal promptitude. Then all hands set to work rigging the captured vessel, and getting her ready for sea. On the shore the people were in the greatest excitement, beating drums, parading the few militia, and threatening dire revenge in the name of outraged Spain. But the captors of the vessel paid but little attention to their enemies; and by sunset the "Sandwich," with all sails set, left the harbor, and joined the United States squadron.

The news of this achievement, lawless as it was, evoked great enthusiasm in the United States. A nation's conscience is elastic; and the people praised the heroes of the "Sandwich" episode, much as sixty-five years later they commended the commander of the "Wachuset" for running down and capturing the Confederate ship "Florida," which was relying upon the protection of a neutral port in Brazil. Yet in 1814, when two British frigates attacked and captured the "Essex" in the harbor of Rio Janeiro, the good people of the United States were loud in their denunciations of the treachery of a commander who would so abuse the protection of a neutral nation. Such inconsistencies are only too common in the history of nations. In the end, however, the affair of the "Sandwich" terminated disastrously for the bold adventurers; for the protests of Spain were too forcible to be disregarded, and the prize-money of all concerned in the exploit was confiscated to pay the damages awarded the injured party.

Not all the successes of the United States navy in the war with France were, like those we have related, dependent upon the speed rather than the fighting qualities of our ships. Not many months had passed, when two representative ships of the warring nations met, and tried conclusions at the mouths of their cannon. It was on the 9th of February that the "Constellation," one of the new American frigates, was cruising on her station in the West Indies, when her lookout reported a large ship some miles to leeward. The frigate at once ran down upon the stranger, which hoisted American colors. Among ships of the same navy it is customary to have private signals of recognition; and Commodore Truxton, who commanded the "Constellation," set his signal, and awaited the answer. But no answer came; and the stranger, evidently considering further disguise impossible, boldly set French colors, and fired a gun to windward by way of a challenge.

On the "Constellation" the challenge aroused universal enthusiasm. For the first time since the Revolution, the gallant defenders of the stars and stripes were to have an opportunity to try their strength with a hostile man-of-war. The enemy seemed no less ready for the conflict, and waited gallantly for the "Constellation" to come down to closer quarters. From both ships came the roll of the drums and the shrill pipings of the bo's'n's whistle, as the men were called to quarters. Then all became still, and the two frigates bore down upon each other. Neither antagonist was hasty about opening fire, and the report of the first gun came from the Yankee when she had come into point-blank range. Then began the thunderous broadsides, that soon enveloped the hulls of the two ships in dense gray smoke; so that, to an observer at a little distance, all that could be seen of the fight was the tapering masts and yard-arms, above the smoke, crowded with sailors repairing damages, and nimble young midshipmen shrilly ordering about the grizzled seamen, and now and again taking a crack at the enemy with pistol or musket, by way of recreation. In the foretop of the "Constellation" was stationed young David Porter, who in that trying moment showed the result of his hard schooling in the merchant-service, of which we have spoken. By the rapid fire of the enemy, the foretopmast was badly cut, and there was great danger that it might go by the board. Porter hailed the deck several times for instructions, but, finding that his voice could not be heard above the roar of battle, determined to act upon his own responsibility, and accordingly cut away the sails, lowered the yards, and, by relieving the injured spar of all strain, prevented its falling. In the mean time the battle raged fiercely below. The American frigate was more powerful in her armament, and better handled, than the Frenchman. Her guns were handled with deliberation, and the aim of the gunners was sure and deadly; while the shot from the enemy went hurtling through the rigging of the "Constellation," doing but little damage. The decks of the Frenchman were covered with dead and wounded, and at last two raking broadsides from the American frigate ended the conflict. When the vanquished ship was boarded, she proved to be the "Insurgente," the same frigate that had captured the "Retaliation" some months before. Her loss in this engagement amounted to twenty-nine killed and forty-one wounded, while the cock-pit of the "Constellation" was tenanted by but three wounded men; and but one American had lost his life, he having been killed by an officer, for cowardice. Both ships were badly cut up in the engagement.

The news of this victory was received with great rejoicing in the United States, and was celebrated with cannon-firing and the ringing of bells. At Boston, the fourth Sunday in March was set for a day of general rejoicing; and on that day huge crowds gathered in State Street, and after salutes had been fired, and the city's bells pealed, the people, at a given signal, joined in three mighty cheers, that fairly shook the surrounding houses, for Truxton, the "Constellation," the blue-jackets, and the success of the wooden walls of America.

Even after the "Insurgente" had struck her flag, the tars of the "Constellation" found they had an elephant on their hands. The work of transferring the prisoners was begun, and actively prosecuted; but, when night fell, there were still nearly two hundred Frenchmen on the prize. The wind was rising fast, and the long rollers of the Atlantic were being lashed into foaming breakers by the rising gale. It was hazardous for the two vessels to continue near each other; and Lieutenant Rodgers, with Midshipman Porter and eleven men, was detailed to take charge of the prize, and bring her into port. When the officers boarded the prize, they found that they had indeed a desperate undertaking before them. It was difficult enough for thirteen men to handle the great ship, without having to keep in subjection one hundred and seventy-three captives. To add to the danger, the gratings had been thrown overboard, and there was no way of confining the captives in the hold. A careful search for handcuffs resulted only in failure. But Rodgers was a man of decision, and Porter, though but a boy, was bold and determined; and between them they solved the problem. The prisoners were ordered below; and a sentinel was placed at each hatchway, with orders to shoot the first man who should attempt to come on deck. Howitzers loaded with grape were trained upon the hatchway, for use in case of an organized movement of the prisoners. For three days the officers sustained this fearful strain, without a moment's sleep; but their labors were finally crowned by successfully bringing the ship and prisoners into St. Kitts.

In the second pitched battle of the war, the "Constellation" was again the American combatant; but this time, though the fight was a glorious one, it did not terminate so fortunately for the American ship. It was on the 1st of February, 1800, that the gallant frigate, under the same commander, was cruising about her old hunting-grounds, near Guadaloupe. A sail was sighted, which, after a careful examination through his marine-glass, Commodore Truxton pronounced to be an English merchantman. As an invitation to the stranger to approach, English colors were hoisted on the "Constellation," but had only the effect of causing the stranger to sheer off; for she was, indeed, a French war-vessel. Perplexed by the actions of the mysterious ship, the "Constellation" gave chase, and soon came near enough to see that she had caught a Tartar; for the vessel was the French frigate "La Vengeance," mounting fifty-two guns. Although a more powerful vessel than the American, she continued her flight; while the gallant Truxton, caring nothing for the odds against him, kept on in hot pursuit. All the remainder of that day, and until noon of the next, the chase continued, with but little change in the position of the ships. "A stern chase is a long chase," thought the jackies on the "Constellation;" but they were not discouraged, and only crowded on the more sail. On the afternoon of the second day, the American began to gain rapidly; and by eight at night the two ships were within speaking distance of each other. Truxton mounted the rail, and shouted through a speaking-trumpet, "What ship is that?" The only answer was a shot from the stern-port of the Frenchman, and the fight was opened.

It was then growing dark, though the faint glow of the long tropic twilight still lingered on the western horizon. Above the towering masts of the two great frigates, the stars gleamed with a brilliancy seldom seen in more northern latitudes. As the ships rushed through the water, the waves broke against the bows, and fell back in masses of phosphorescent light; while the wakes of the vessels could be traced far back into the darkness, — two parallel paths of light, that glowed and sparkled like the milky way that spanned the starry sky above.

Side by side the two frigates ploughed through the water. The creaking of their cordage, and the rushing of the wind through the rigging, mingled with the thunder of the cannonade, which, though slow, and made up of single reports, when the "Constellation" was confined to the use of her bow-chasers, soon rose to thunderous broadsides as the two ships came side to side. As the twilight died away, the two contestants were enveloped in almost total darkness, save for the fitful flashes of the cannon, and the red glare of the battle-lanterns that hung from the shrouds. The gunners had for a target nothing but a black, shapeless mass, that could be seen rushing through the waves some hundreds of yards away. But this did not prevent fearful execution being done on both sides. For five hours the two ships kept up the running fight. The ponderous eighteen and forty-two pound shot of the enemy crashed into the "Constellation," or swept her decks, doing dreadful damage. The deck was strewn with dead and dying men, and the surgeons down in the cock-pit soon had their tables full of moaning sufferers. No one could tell what might be the condition of "La Vengeance;" but her regular fire told that she was in no wise disabled. At one o'clock in the morning, the sound of her guns seemed to be more distant; and by the flash of the cannon it was seen that she was drawing out of the fight. The Americans cheered lustily, and Truxton ordered that his ship be braced up in chase.

But the fire of the enemy had been rapid and well directed; and now, at this critical moment, its results were to rob the "Constellation" of her victory. As the ships were brought about, to follow in the track of the flying "Vengeance," an officer came rushing to the quarter-deck, and reported that all the shrouds and braces of the foremast had been shot away, and the mast was in momentary danger of falling. The rigging had been so literally cut in pieces by the fire of the enemy, that splicing was out of the question; but Truxton, in the hope of saving his mast, called all hands from the guns, and the fire of the "Constellation" stopped.

Up in the foretop was stationed Midshipman Jarvis, with a dozen or more of jackies, whose duty it was to mend the cordage of the topmast, and to keep up a musketry fire upon the enemy. Long before the officer of the deck had reported the danger of the foremast, one of the topmen had told Jarvis, who was but a lad, that the mast was likely to fall.

"Ay, ay, my lad," responded the plucky young officer; "but our place is here, and we must go with it."

The sailors on the deck below worked manfully: but, notwithstanding all their efforts, the mast soon went by the board; and Jarvis and his brave comrades were thrown far out into the black water, never to be seen again.

The fall of the foremast ended the battle for the "Constellation." Helpless, and cumbered by the wreck, she tossed about on the water, while her foe made good her escape. What might have been the outcome of the conflict, had it continued, it is impossible to tell. "La Vengeance" carried heavier metal and a larger crew than the American frigate; and Truxton, with all his dash, found no mean adversary in Capt. Pitot. Yet the condition of the French ship when she came into port at Curaçoa showed that the fire of the Yankee gunners had been rapid and accurate. Fifty of the enemy were killed, and one hundred and ten wounded; while, of the Americans, only thirty-nine appeared on the lists of killed and wounded. It was said at the time, that Capt. Pitot reported having struck his flag three times; hoisting it again, on finding that in the darkness the "Constellation" took no notice of the surrender. But this seems, on the face of it, improbable; and the action can hardly be awarded to either ship, although the gallantry shown on either side was enough to win a victory.

It may well be imagined that this brilliant action, together with the capture of "L'Insurgente," made the "Constellation" the most popular ship of the navy; a place which she held until the stirring events of the war with England pushed the "Constitution" so far to the front, that even now, when she lies dismantled and rotting at the Brooklyn navy-yard, Americans still think of "Old Ironsides" as the typical ship of our once glorious navy.

The actions between the "Constellation" and the "Vengeance" and "Insurgente" were the chief contests between regularly commissioned ships of the two nations in the war with France. But the West Indies were filled with privateers and semi-piratical craft, with which the navy waged a ceaseless warfare, which well prepared the blue-jackets for the graver struggle which was yet to come with Great Britain. The half-savage population of the French islands was a fruitful source of trouble to the

American seaman. These gentry, known as Picaroons, seemed to have a natural inclination for piracy; and the unlucky merchant-captain who should come to anchor, or be becalmed, near one of the islands, was sure to see his vessel boarded, and his cargo plundered, by a lawless horde of Frenchmen and mulattoes, whose dialect was an unmusical combination of French and African tongues. The custom of the Picaroons was to do their cruising in huge barges propelled by sweeps. With these they would often cut out a merchant-vessel from beneath the guns of a protecting man-of-war, and tow her off to be plundered at leisure. Occasionally, however, their well-laid plans failed in the execution.

One of the most noted of these occasions was the repulse of ten Picaroon barges that attacked the United States topsail schooner "Experiment," and a fleet of merchantmen under her charge. The "Experiment," with her convoy, was lying becalmed in the Bight of Leogane, in the island of San Domingo. Not a breath of air was stirring; and the vessels, drifting about at the mercy of the currents, soon became widely separated and were an easy prey for the hordes of Picaroons that swarmed in that region. In no way could the "Experiment" secure a position which would enable her to protect all the merchantmen. In this dilemma it was determined to disguise the war-vessel, in the hopes that the pirates, taking her for a merchantman, would attack her first. This was done; and, as luck would have it, the Picaroons fell into the trap.

Although not the captain of the ship, Lieut. David Porter was in command on this occasion; and, on hearing that ten Picaroon barges with swivels in the bows, and crews of forty men each, were approaching, he sent his crew to quarters, and prepared for a desperate resistance. Onward over the smooth waters came the huge barges, each with its twenty-six oars, looking like a mighty centipede. On the ship every thing was quiet, as the jackies stood to their guns, with the prospect of a deadly struggle before them. Should the barges get to close quarters, and surround the schooner, no earthly power could prevent their boarding, when their numbers would surely bring them success. But the painful pause before the battle was not long. Suddenly Porter, ever on the alert, cried out to fire. From every gun that could be brought to bear, a storm of grape and canister was rained upon the advancing boats; and the yells that went up from the astounded Picaroons told of the deadly work done in the crowded boats. For a moment, the fleet of barges fell into confusion; some retreating, some advancing, and others drifting about helpless. Although the murderous fire was kept up, the pirates formed again, and attempted to get alongside, but were repeatedly beaten back. With musketry and swivels they attempted to answer the fire of the Americans; but with little effect, for the crew of the "Experiment" kept close under the bulwarks. Men were precious then, and Porter would not let one expose himself unnecessarily; but he himself, from his prominent post of observation, was an easy mark, and a Picaroon's bullet soon lodged in his shoulder. Notwithstanding the painful wound, he never left his post. The unexpected opposition only maddened the Picaroons, and they made desperate attempts to get alongside; but to no avail. Now the stern and now the bow of the "Experiment" was chosen as the point of attack; but still the rapid fire of the jackies beat the pirates back.

On the low-lying shores of the islands, some hundreds more of the Picaroons had gathered to watch the conflict; and, as the boats became short-handed from the carnage, they put back to the shore, and returned to the fight fully re-enforced. The bodies of the dead were thrown overboard without ceremony, and soon attracted great schools of the fierce sharks that abound in the waters of the tropics. Then a new horror was added to the scene. At a moment when the barges wavered and floated for a moment without motion, Porter ordered his gunners to load with solid shot. Two or three broadsides rang out; and, when the smoke cleared away, two barges were seen to be sinking. The affrighted crews bent to their oars, and strained every muscle to reach the shore; but while yet in deep water, the barges sunk, and the Picaroons were left floundering in the sea. All struck out manfully for the shore; but suddenly one sprung half from the water, and with a horrid yell sunk from sight. One after another disappeared in the same way; for the sharks had tasted blood, and were not to be appeased. For seven hours the conflict raged fiercely; but at last the Picaroons confessed themselves beaten, and sullenly relinquished their attacks upon the "Experiment." But they were not to be wholly robbed of their plunder; and two merchant-vessels fell a prey to their piratical violence, before a breeze, springing up, enabled the squadron to escape.

Before the year was over, the Picaroons had another serious defeat to mourn over; and on this second occasion they were well punished for their many piracies. The "Boston," a twenty-eight-gun ship, was convoying a merchant-brig to Port au Prince, when the lookout discovered nine large barges skulking along the shore, ready to pounce upon the two vessels when a favorable moment should arrive. Porter was again in command. His tactics were at once determined upon; and the ports of the "Boston" were closed, and the ship thoroughly disguised. The Picaroons were deceived sufficiently to make a dash upon the two ships, and approach boldly within easy gun-shot; then, discovering their mistake, they turned and fled in panic. This time no calm hampered the ship-of-war; and, making all sail, she dashed into their midst. For two hours she kept within easy range of the barges; and her gunners, working deliberately, did fearful execution in the ranks of the enemy, and sunk three barges before the wretched fugitives could reach the shore. After dealing out this summary justice, the "Boston" continued her voyage, and, after leaving her convoy in the port of her destination, began a cruise about the islands and the Spanish Main. In the course of this cruise she met the French corvette "Le Berceau," which struck after a plucky action of two hours. The Frenchman was badly cut up in hull and rigging, and shortly after the surrender her fore and main masts went by the board. The "Boston" was but little injured, and took her prize safely into port.

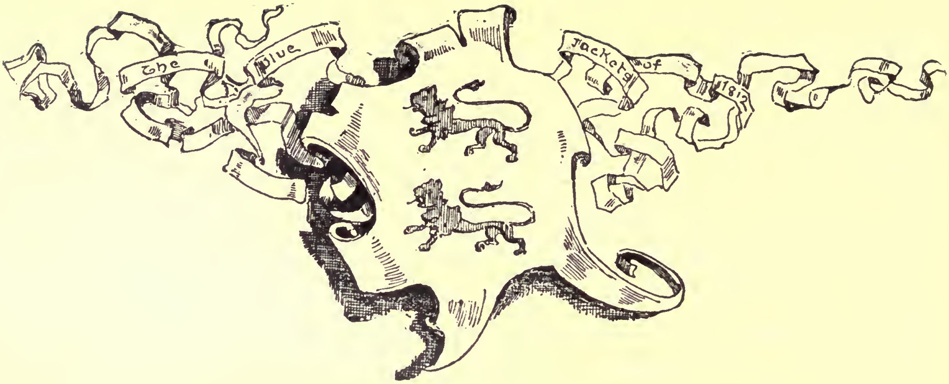
After this the fighting was chiefly confined to short, sharp affrays between the smaller United States ships and the French privateers, which were generally good sailers and well manned, although deficient in metal. The great frigates like the "Constellation" found no more adversaries worthy of their fighting qualities, and only the sloops and topsail-schooners gave their crews a chance to smell gunpowder. Some of these smaller actions, however, were sharp and gallant, although their details have not been preserved like those of the famous naval duels.

The "Experiment," after her adventure with the Picaroons, fought two gallant battles, and was successful in each, although the second for a time threatened to lead to international difficulties. While cruising on her station, the vessel made two sail, which, as they came nearer, proved to be a brig of eighteen guns and a three-masted schooner of twenty guns, both flying the French tricolor, and both intent on mischief. The

American fled, but laid her course in such a way as to separate the two pursuers. When night had fallen, Lieut.-Commander Stewart, who commanded the "Experiment," saw that the enemy's forces were divided by about a league of green water, and at once determined to strike a blow. Doubling on his course, he ran his vessel alongside the schooner, and poured in two or three broadsides with such rapidity and haste that the Frenchman struck before his consort could come to his aid. Hastily throwing Lieut. Porter and a prize-crew aboard the prize, Stewart dashed off after the brig, which fled incontinently, and proved too good a sailer to be overtaken. Pure audacity had carried the day for the "Experiment," for the brig was powerful enough to have blown her pursuer to bits in a short engagement.

The second exploit of the "Experiment" was no less gallant than this, but in the end proved far less satisfactory. Late in a summer's afternoon a suspicious sail was made; and the chase, begun at once, had continued until nightfall. When darkness settled over the ocean, Stewart calculated the course laid by the stranger, and ordered his helmsman to keep the ship on that course until midnight, when, if the fugitive was not overhauled, the chase would be abandoned. Just before midnight a sail was seen near by and to windward. The men were sent to quarters; and with guns shotted, and battle-lanterns burning, the "Experiment" ran up under the stranger's lee, and hailed. No answer was returned. Perplexed and irritated, Stewart ordered a shot fired into the stranger, which was no sooner done than a broadside was returned, which made the schooner reel. Both vessels were then plunged into conflict, though neither knew the name or nationality of the opponent. For a time the "Experiment" was handicapped by the heavy wind, which laid her over so far that her guns were elevated skyward, and her shot whistled through the enemy's tops. To obviate this, planks were thrust under the breeches of the guns, until at last the proper range was secured, when an active cannonade soon forced the stranger to strike. Lieut. Porter was sent to take possession of the prize; but the report he brought back put all thought of prize-money out of the minds of the victors, for the stranger was a Bermudian privateer, flying the British flag, and under the protection of a nation with which the United States was at peace. The fault lay with the privateers for not responding to the hail, but the Americans did all in their power to repair the damage done. All the next day they lay by their vanquished adversary, and the sailors of two ships worked side by side in patching up the injuries done by the shot. By night the privateer was able to continue her cruise, resolving, doubtless, to avoid future conflicts with the ships of the American navy.

But to enter into the details of each of the naval duels of the French war of 1798, would require a volume devoted exclusively to its consideration. Although there was never a declaration of war between the two countries, yet the warfare on the ocean was earnest, and even desperate. Both nations went to work with a will, and the results were of incalculable benefit to the then pygmy navy of the United States. In their newspapers the Americans read with wonder and pride of the successes of their new vessels and young sailors, against the trained seamen and best frigates of France. When the war closed, the country rang with the praises of the blue-jackets. Indeed, a record of sixty-four French vessels captured, besides many American vessels which were recaptured from their captors, was enough to arouse feelings of pride throughout the nation; and the celerity with which France seized upon the proposal for peace showed well the reputation which our navy had gained beyond the ocean. For months after the peace was signed, the names of Bainbridge, Truxton, Stewart, and Talbot were household words throughout the nation; and the deeds of the gallant ships along the Spanish Main were the favorite stories of the boys of the land. Three of the oaken veterans, however, never came home; but against their names must be put the saddest of all naval records: foundered at sea. The captured "Insurgente," the "Saratoga," and the "Pickering" simply vanished from the ocean. Over fourscore years have passed; and of them, and the gallant lads that manned them, nothing has ever been known. Whether they perished by the fury of the tropical typhoon, whether a midnight collision sent them suddenly to the bottom, or whether the ships were destroyed and the crews murdered by the piratical desperadoes of the West Indies, can never be known. Somewhere on the coral-strewn bed of the blue seas of the tropics lie the mouldering hulks of those good ships, and the bones of their gallant crews. There will they lie, unknown and unsought, until earthly warfare is over for all men, and the sea gives up its dead.



CHAPTER III.

PROPOSED REDUCTION OF THE NAVY.—RENEWAL OF BRITISH OUTRAGES.—THE AFFAIR OF THE "BALTIMORE."—ATTACK ON THE "LEANDER."—ENCOUNTER BETWEEN THE "CHESAPEAKE" AND "LEOPARD."

NOT many months had elapsed after the close of the war between the United States and France, when the pride of the nation in the navy that had won such laurels in that conflict began to wane. In the place of poems and editorials singing the praises and pointing out the value of the navy, the newspapers began to be filled with demands for its reduction. It was an unwarrantable expense, exclaimed the critics of the press, for a nation so young, and so far from the warring peoples of Europe, to maintain a navy at all. A few gunboats to guard the coast would be enough. All the consequences of the reduction of the navy at the close of the Revolution were forgotten in an instant. A penny-wise and pound-foolish spirit came over all the political leaders; and the Democratic party, then newly come into power, determined to endear itself to the hearts of the people by cutting down the expenses of the Government, and to this end they attacked first the appropriations for the navy. A gallant fight was made against the total abolition of the navy; and finally it was decided to retain thirteen of the ships-of-war on the list, while the others should be sold.

With these thirteen vessels, of which the most noted were the "Constitution," the "Constellation," and the "United States," the navy was placed upon a peace footing. Even this moderate squadron, however, brought out much opposition from economically minded statesmen; but the aggressions of the Barbary pirates, and the war with Tripoli which opened in 1801, gave the sailor lads active employment, and for the time the outcry of the economists against the navy ceased.

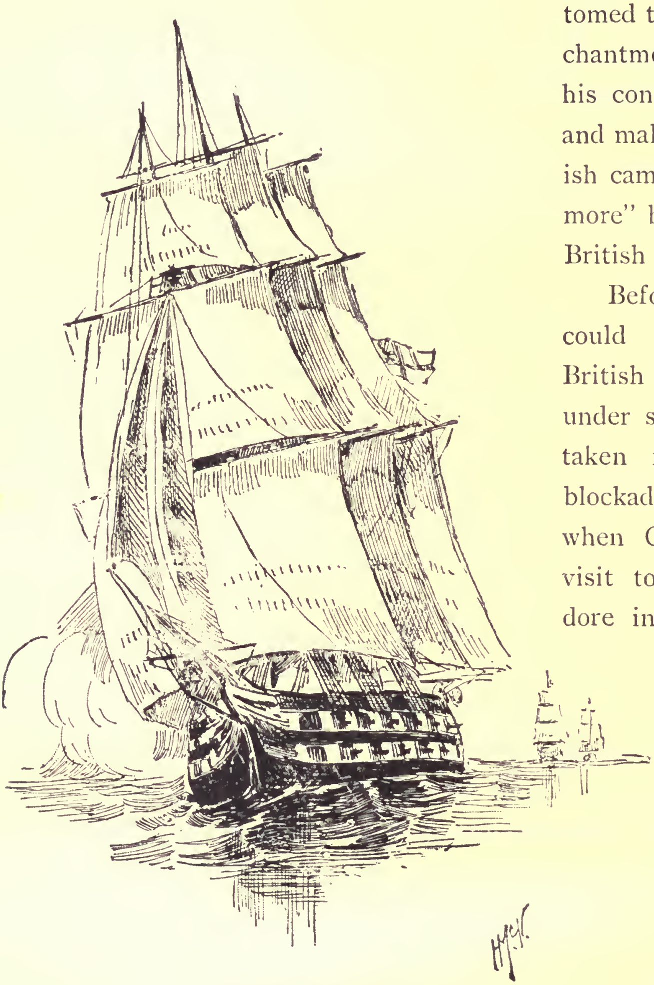
Of the various wars with Tripoli and the other states of Barbary, we have already given some account. The political bearing of the Tripolitan war upon the war which afterwards followed with Great Britain was slight; but, as discipline for the sterner reality of naval warfare with the nation long reputed to be "mistress of the seas," the experience of the Yankee tars with the turbaned infidels was invaluable.

Let us, then, return to the shameful recountal of the injuries committed by the British upon the American flag on the high seas. Even while the United States was at war with France, and thus aiding the British, the outrages never ceased. American sailors were still impressed. American vessels were boarded, and often seized, on the slightest pretexts. Even the ships of the Government were not exempt, for the British respected no right save that of greater power.

It was in November, 1798, that the United States sloop-of-war "Baltimore," of twenty guns, and under command of Capt. Phillips, was in charge of a convoy of merchantmen bound to Havana. On the morning of the 16th of that month, the sloop, with her convoy, were in sight of their destination, and could even see the solid, towering walls of the Moro, rising high above the low-lying shores about Havana. The breeze was fresh and fair; and all hands expected to cast anchor before night in the beautiful bay, on the shores of which stands the chief city of the island of fruits and spices. On the "Baltimore" the jackies were busily at work holystoning the decks, until they glistened with the milky whiteness dear to the eye of the sailor of the days before the era of yellow pine or black, unsightly iron ships. The shrouds and standing rigging had been pulled taut with many a "Yo, heave ho!" until the wind hummed plaintively through the taut cordage, as through the resounding strings of an Æolian harp. The brasswork and polished breeches of the guns were polished by the vigorous rubbing by muscular sailors, until they shone again. All told of a coming season in a friendly port.

While the work of preparation for port was thus going busily on, the lookout hailed the deck, and reported a squadron in sight. A moment's glance convinced Capt. Phillips that the strangers were British war-vessels; and, as they were still accustomed to annoy American merchantmen, he hastily signalled his convoy to carry sail hard, and make port before the British came up, while the "Baltimore" bore up to speak to the British commodore.

Before the merchantmen could escape, however, the British cut off three of them, under some peculiar and mistaken ideas of the law of blockades. More than this, when Capt. Phillips paid his visit to the English commodore in the latter's cabin, he was calmly informed that it was intended to take from the "Baltimore" into the British service every sailor who had not a regular American protection; this under the new English doctrine, that every sailor was an Englishman unless proved to be otherwise. The avowal by the British captain of this intention filled Phillips with indignation, and he warmly protested against any such action.



THE BRITISH SQUADRON.

It would, he insisted, be an outrage on the dignity of the nation which he served; and, as the overpowering force of the British rendered resistance impossible, he should insist upon surrendering his ship should they persist in their undertaking, which was no more nor less than open warfare. With this he arose from his seat, and leaving the cabin, to which he had been invited as the guest of a friendly nation, returned to his own ship.

Here he found a state of affairs that still further added to his indignation. At the foot of the gangway of the "Baltimore" floated a boat from one of the British ships, and on the deck of the sloop was a lieutenant in British uniform in the act of mustering the American crew. Capt. Phillips at once seized the muster-roll, and ordered the officious Briton to walk to leeward, while the crew of the "Baltimore" were sent to their quarters.

But, having done this, he became doubtful as to the course for him to pursue. Successful resistance was out of the question; for he was surrounded by five British vessels, one of which carried ninety-eight guns, while the smallest mounted thirty-two, or twelve more than the "Baltimore." Even had the odds against him been less great, Capt. Phillips felt grave doubts as to his authority to resist any armed vessel. He had sailed under instructions that "the vessels of every other nation (France excepted) are on no account to be molested; and I wish particularly to impress upon your mind," wrote the Secretary of the Navy, "that should you ever see an American vessel captured by the armed ship of any nation at war, with whom we are at peace, you cannot lawfully interfere, for it is to be taken for granted that such nation will compensate for such capture, if it should prove to have been illegally made." After some deliberation over this clause in his instructions, Capt. Phillips concluded that for him to make even a formal resistance would be illegal; and accordingly the flag of the "Baltimore" was lowered, and the British were told that the ship was at their disposal. They immediately seized upon fifty-five men from the American crew, who were taken away to the British fleet. But in this wholesale impressment they did not persist. Fifty of the men were sent back; and the squadron set sail, carrying away the five pressed men, and leaving the men of the "Baltimore," from the captain down to the smallest cabin-boy, smarting under the sense of an indignity and insult offered to the flag under which they served.

Capt. Phillips hoisted his flag again, and continued his cruise. News travelled slowly in those days; and the tidings of this latest British insult did not reach the United States until the "Baltimore," returning home, brought it herself. Hardly had the ship reached port, when Capt. Phillips hastened to Philadelphia, then the national capital, and laid his report of the affair before the Government. In a week's time, without even the formality of a trial, he was dismissed from the navy.

After the lapse of more than eighty years it is impossible to look back upon this affair without indignation, mortification, and regret. That the naval officers of Great Britain should have been able, by the mere force of arms, to inflict so cruel an insult upon our flag, can but arouse indignation in the breast of every true American. And the humiliation was great enough, without having added to it the obviously hasty and unjust action of the authorities, in dismissing, without a trial, an officer who had faithfully served his country. It is indeed possible that Capt. Phillips erred gravely in his course; but justice alone demanded for him a fair trial, and the nature of his instructions certainly afforded him some justification for his action.

The years that opened the nineteenth century were full of events that exerted the greatest influence over the growth of the United States. The continuance of the Napoleonic wars in Europe, our own war with the Barbary powers, the acquisition of Louisiana, — all these had their effect on the growth of the young Republic of the West. But, at the same time, England was continuing her policy of oppression. Her cruisers and privateers swarmed upon the ocean; and impressment of seamen and seizure of vessels became so common, that in 1806 memorials and petitions from seamen and merchants of the seaport towns poured in upon Congress, begging that body to take some action to save American commerce from total destruction. Congress directed the American minister in London to protest; but to no avail. Even while the correspondence on the subject was being carried on, the British gave renewed evidence of their hostility to their former Colonies, and their scorn for the military or naval power of the United States. From the far-off shores of the Mediterranean came the news that boats from the fleet of the British Admiral Collingwood had boarded the United States gunboat No. 7, and taken from her three sailors, under the pretence that they were Englishmen. But an occurrence that shortly followed, nearer home, threw this affair into oblivion, and still further inflamed the national hatred of the English.

A small coasting sloop, one of hundreds that made voyages along the American coast from Portland to Savannah, was running past Sandy Hook into New York Bay, when she was hailed by the British ship "Leander," and ordered to heave to. The captain of the coaster paid no attention to the order, and continued on his way, until a shot from the cruiser crashed into the sloop, and took off the head of the captain, John Pearce of New York. This was murder, and the action of the British in firing upon the sloop was gross piracy. Such an outrage, occurring so near the chief city of the United States, aroused a storm of indignation. The merchants of New York held meetings at the old Tontine Coffee-House, and denounced not only the action of the British cruiser, but even impeached the Government of the United States; declaring that an administration which suffered foreign armed ships to "impress, wound, and murder citizens was not entitled to the confidence of a brave and free people." The fact that the captain of the offending cruiser, on being brought to trial in England, was honorably acquitted, did not tend to soothe the irritation of the Americans.

Occurrences such as this kept alive the American dislike for the English, and a year later an event happened which even the most ardent peace-lover could not but condemn and resent with spirit.

In 1807 the United States frigate "Chesapeake," then lying at the navy-yard at Washington, was put in commission, and ordered to the Mediterranean, to relieve the "Constitution." Nearly a month was consumed in making necessary repairs to hull and cordage, taking in stores, shipping a crew, and attending to the thousand and one details of preparation for sea that a long time out of commission makes necessary to a man-of-war. While the preparations for service were actively proceeding, the British minister informed the naval authorities that three deserters from His British Majesty's ship "Melampus" had joined the crew of the "Chesapeake;" and it was requested that they should be given up. The request was made with due courtesy; and, although there is no principle of international law which directs the surrender of deserters, yet the United States, as a friendly nation, was inclined to grant the request, and an inquiry was made into the case. The facts elicited put the surrender of the men out of the question; for though they frankly confessed to have deserted from the "Melampus," yet they claimed to have been impressed into the British service, and proved conclusively that they were free Americans. This was reported to the British minister; and, as he made no further protests, it was assumed that he was satisfied.

Some weeks later the vessel left the navy-yard, and dropped down the river to Hampton Roads. Even with the long period occupied in preparation for sea, the armament of the ship was far from being in order; a fact first discovered as she passed Mount Vernon, as she was unable to fire the salute with which at that time all passing war-vessels did honor to the tomb of Washington. After some days' stay at Hampton Roads, during which time additional guns and stores were taken on, and the crew increased to three hundred and seventy-five men, the ship got under way, and started on her voyage.

It was on a breezy morning of June that the "Chesapeake" left the broad harbor of Hampton Roads, the scene of so many of our naval glories. From the masthead of the frigate floated the broad pennant of Commodore Barron, who went out in command of the ship. The decks were littered with ropes, lumber, and stores, which had arrived too late to be properly stowed away. Some confusion is but natural on a ship starting on a cruise which may continue for years, but the condition of the "Chesapeake" was beyond all excuse; a fact for which the fitting-out officers, not her commander, were responsible.

As the American ship passed out into the open ocean, there was a great stir on the decks of four English cruisers that lay quietly at anchor in Lynn Haven Bay; and almost immediately one of these vessels hoisted her anchor, set her sails, and started out in the track of the frigate. A stiff head-wind blowing, the American was forced to tack frequently, in order to get ahead; and her officers noticed that the British ship (the "Leopard," of fifty guns) tacked at the same time, and was evidently following doggedly in the wake of the "Chesapeake." No suspicion that the pursuer had other than peaceful motives in view entered the minds of the American officers; and the ship kept on her course, while the sailors set about putting the decks in order, and getting the vessel in trim for her long voyage. While all hands were thus busily engaged, the "Leopard" bore down rapidly, and soon hailed, saying that she had a despatch for Commodore Barron. The "Chesapeake" accordingly hove to, and waited for a boat to be sent aboard.

The two ships now lay broadside to broadside, and only about a half pistol-shot apart. No idea that the Englishman had any hostile designs seems to have occurred to Commodore Barron; but some of the younger officers noticed that the ports of the "Leopard" were triced up, and the tompions taken out of the muzzles of the cannon. The latter fact was of the gravest import, and should have been reported at once to the commander; but it appears that this was not done.

In a few moments a boat put off from the "Leopard," and pulled to the American ship, where an officer stood waiting at the gangway, and conducted the visitor to Barron's cabin. Here the English lieutenant produced an order, signed by the British Admiral Berkeley, commanding all British ships to watch for the "Chesapeake," and search her for deserters. Commodore Barron immediately responded, that the "Chesapeake" harbored no deserters, and he could not permit his crew to be mustered by the officer of any foreign power. Hardly had this response been made, when a signal from the "Leopard" recalled the boarding officer to his ship.

The officers of the "Chesapeake" were now fully aroused to the dangers of the situation, and began the attempt to get the ship in readiness for action. Commodore Barron, coming out of his cabin for the first time, was forcibly struck by the air of preparation for action presented by the "Leopard." Capt. Gordon, the second in command, was ordered to hasten the work on the gun-deck, and call the crew to quarters. The drummers began to beat the call to quarters, but hasty orders soon stopped them; and the men went to their places quietly, hoping that the threatening attitude of the "Leopard" was mere bravado.

The most painful suspense was felt by all on board the American ship. The attitude of the "Leopard" left little doubt of her hostile intentions, while a glance about the decks of the "Chesapeake" told how little fitted she was to enter into action. Her crew was a new one, never exercised at the guns, and had been mustered to quarters only three times. On the gun-deck lay great piles of cumbrous cables, from the coiling of which the men had been summoned by the call to quarters. On the after-deck were piles of furniture, trunks, and some temporary pantries. What little semblance of order there was, was due to the efforts of one of the lieutenants, who, suspecting trouble when the "Leopard" first came up, had made great exertions toward getting the ship clear

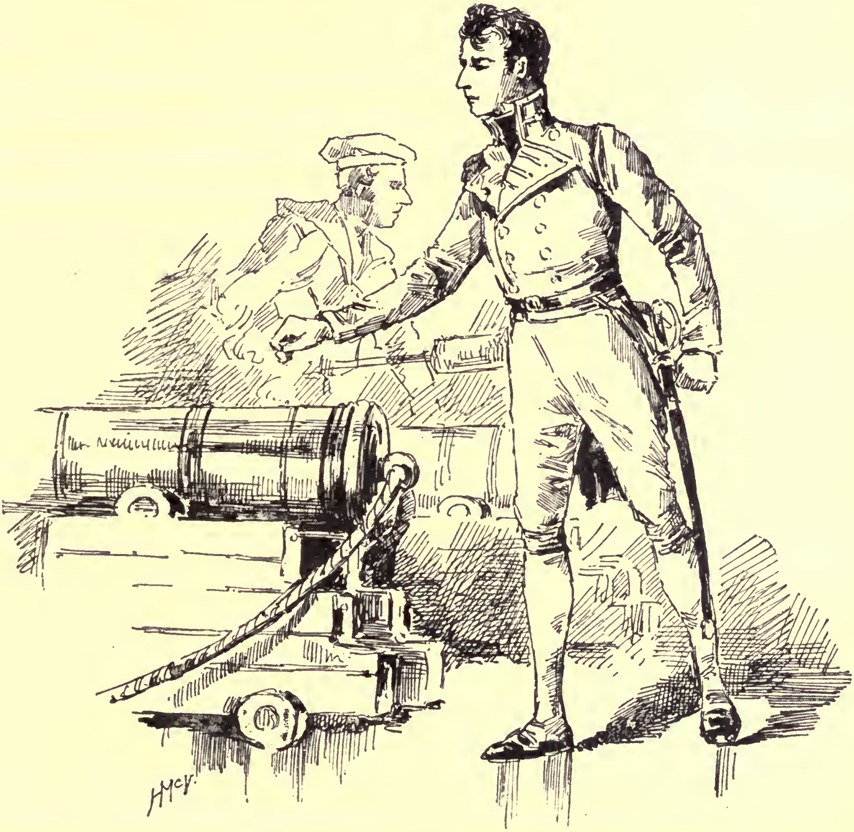
While the captain stood looking ruefully at the confusion, still more serious troubles were reported. The guns were loaded; but no rammers, powder-flasks, matches, wads, or gun-locks could be found. While search was being made for these necessary articles, a hail came from the "Leopard." Commodore Barron shouted back that he did not understand.

"Commodore Barron must be aware that the orders of the vice-admiral must be obeyed," came the hail again.

Barron again responded that he did not understand. After one or two repetitions, the British determined to waste no more time in talking; and a single shot fired from the bow of the "Leopard" was quickly followed by a full broadside. The heavy shot crashed into the sides of the "Chesapeake," wounding many of the men, and adding to the confusion on the gun-deck. No answer came from the American frigate; for, though the guns were loaded, there was no way of firing them. Matches, locks, or loggerheads were nowhere to be found. Mad with rage at the helpless condition in which they found themselves, the officers made every effort to fire at least one volley. Pokers were heated red-hot in the galley-fire, and carried hastily to the guns, but cooled too rapidly in the rush across the deck. In the mean time, the "Leopard," none too chivalric to take advantage of an unresisting foe, had chosen her position, and was pouring in a deliberate fire. For nearly eighteen minutes the fire was continued, when the flag of the "Chesapeake" was hauled down. Just as it came fluttering from the masthead, Lieut. Allen, crying, "I'll have one shot at those rascals, anyhow," ran to the galley, picked up a live coal in his fingers, and carried it, regardless of the pain, to the nearest gun, which was successfully discharged. This was the only shot that the "Chesapeake" fired during the affair, — battle it cannot be called.

A boat with two British lieutenants and several midshipmen on board speedily boarded the "Chesapeake," and the demand for the deserters was renewed. Four seamen were seized, and borne away in triumph; but the British commander refused to receive the ship as a prize, and even went so far as to express his regret at the loss of life, and proffer his aid in repairing the damages. Both sympathy and assistance were indignantly rejected; and the disgraced ship went sullenly back to Norfolk, bearing a sorely mortified body of officers and seamen. Of the four kidnapped sailors, it may be stated here, that one was hanged, and the other three forced to enter the British service, in which one died. His comrades, five years later, were restored to the deck of the ship from which they had been taken.

The news of this event spread like wildfire over the country, and caused rage and resentment wherever it was known. Cities, towns, and villages called for revenge. The President issued a proclamation, complaining of the habitual insolence of British cruisers, and ordering all such vessels to leave American waters forthwith. As in the reduced state of the navy it was impossible to enforce this order, he forbade all citizens of the United States to give aid to, or have any intercourse with, any such vessels or their crews. War measures were taken both



LIEUT. ALLEN FIRES A SHOT.

by the Federal and State Governments. As usual, the popular wrath was vented upon the least culpable of the people responsible for the condition of the "Chesapeake." Commodore Barron was tried by court-martial, and sentenced to five years' suspension from the service, without pay. The cool judgment of later years perceives the unjustness of this sentence, but its execution cast a deep shadow over the remainder of the unhappy officer's life.

For some years after this episode, little occurred to change the relations of the two nations. The war spirit grew slowly, and was kept alive by the occasional reports of impressments, or the seizure of American ships by British privateers. The navy held its place amid the national defences, although a plan devised by President Jefferson came near putting an end to the old organization. This plan provided for the construction of great numbers of small gunboats, which should be stationed along the coast, to be called out only in case of attack by an armed enemy. A contemporary writer, describing the beauties of this system, wrote, "Whenever danger shall menace any harbor, or any foreign ship shall insult us, somebody is to inform the governor, and the governor is to desire the marshal to call upon the captains of militia to call upon the drummers to beat to arms, and call the militia men together, from whom are to be *drafted* (not impressed) a sufficient number to go on board the gunboats, and drive the hostile stranger away, unless during this long ceremonial he should have taken himself off." Fortunately the gunboat system did not work the total extinction of the old navy.

In 1811 the British aggressions began again, and the situation became more and more warlike. So bold had the privateers become, that they captured a richly laden vessel within thirty miles of New York. Shortly after, the British frigate "Guerriere" stopped an American brig eighteen miles from New York, and took from her a young sailor. The sea was running very rough, and a stiff breeze blowing, when the "Spitfire" was halted by the frigate; but the American captain went with the captured lad to the war-vessel, and assured the commander that he had known the young man as a native of Maine from his boyhood. The reply was, "All that may be so; but he has no protection, and that is enough for me." With these memories fresh, it is not surprising that Americans rejoiced when the news of an encounter terminating in favor of the United States ship was received.

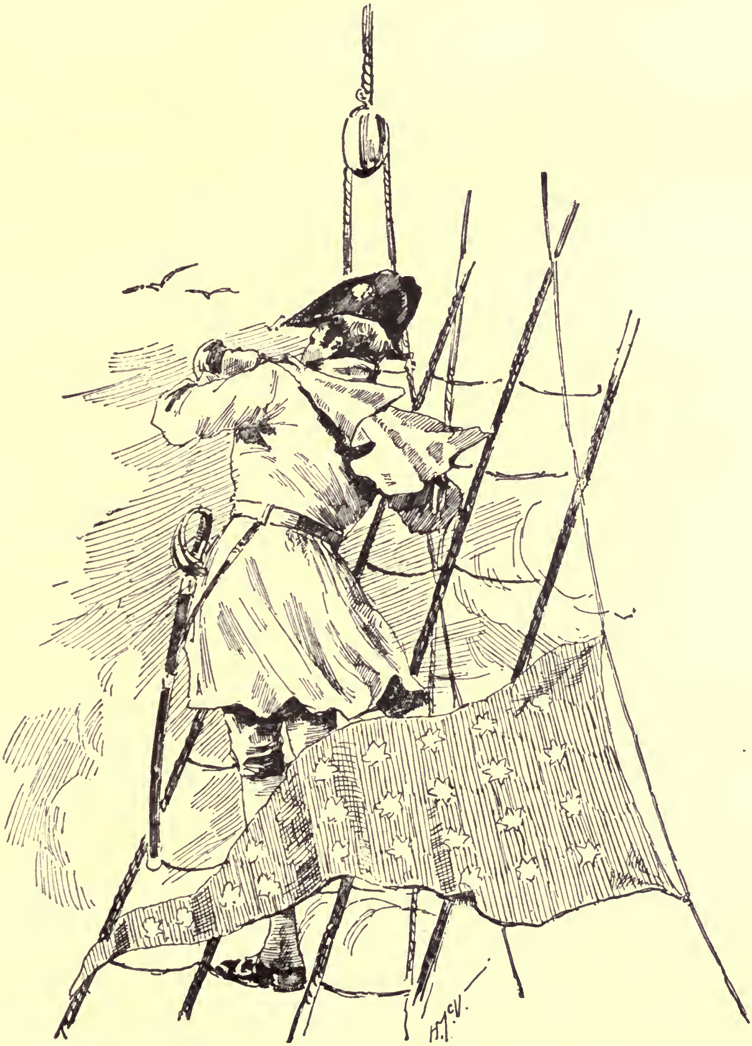
On May 7, 1811, the United States frigate "President" was lying quietly at anchor off Fort Severn, Annapolis. Every thing betokened a state of perfect peace. The muzzles of the great guns were stopped by tompions. The ports were down. In the rigging of the vessel hung garments drying in the sun. At the side floated half a dozen boats. Many of the crew were ashore on leave. The sailing-master was at Baltimore, and the chaplain and purser were at Washington. From the masthead floated the broad pennant of Commodore Rodgers, but he was with his family at Havre de Grace; and the executive officer, Capt. Ludlow, was dining on the sloop-of-war "Argus," lying near at hand. But the captain's dinner was destined to be interrupted that bright May afternoon; for in the midst of the repast a midshipman entered, and reported that the commodore's gig was coming up rapidly, with Rodgers himself on board. The dinner party was hastily broken up, and the captain returned to his ship to receive his superior officer. On his arrival, Commodore Rodgers said that he had received orders to chase the frigate that had impressed the sailor from the "Spitfire," and insist upon the man's being liberated, if he could prove his citizenship. This was good news for every man on the frigate. At last, then, the United States was going to protect its sailors.

Three days were spent in getting the crew together and preparing for sea; then the stately frigate, with all sails set and colors flying, weighed anchor, and stood down the Chesapeake with the intention of cruising near New York. She had been out on the open ocean only a day, when the lookout, from his perch in the crosstrees, reported a strange sail on the horizon. The two vessels appoached each other rapidly; and, as the stranger drew near, Rodgers saw, by the squareness of her yards and the general trim, symmetrical cut of her sails, that she was a war-vessel. Perhaps she may be the offender, thought he, and watched eagerly her approach.

As the stranger came up, the "President" set her broad pennant and ensign; on seeing which the stranger hoisted several signal flags, the significance of which was not understood by the Americans. Finding her signals unanswered, the stranger wore ship, and bore away to the southward, hotly followed by the "President." During all these manœuvres, Rodgers's suspicion of the strange vessel had increased; and her apparent flight only convinced him the more of the hostile character of the stranger. It was a stern chase and a long one, for at the outset the stranger was hull down on the horizon. After an hour it became evident that the "President" was gaining, for the hull of the fugitive was plainly seen. The breeze then died away, so that night had fallen over the waters before the ships were within hailing distance.

A little after eight in the evening the "President" was within a hundred yards of the chase, which could be seen, a dark mass with bright lights shining through the rows of open ports, rushing through the water directly ahead. Rodgers sprang upon the taffrail, and putting a speaking-trumpet to his lips, shouted, "What ship is that?" A dead silence followed. Those on the "President" listened intently for the answer; but no sound was heard save the sigh of the wind through the cordage, the creaking of the spars, and the rush of the water alongside. Rodgers hailed again; and, before the sound of his words had died away, a quick flash of fire leaped from the stern-ports of the chase, and a shot whizzed through the rigging of the "President," doing some slight damage. Rodgers sprang to the deck to order a shot in return; but, before he could do so, a too eager gunner pulled the lanyard of his piece in the second division of the "President's" battery. The enemy promptly answered with three guns, and then let fly a whole broadside, with discharges of musketry from the deck and the tops. This exhausted Rodgers's patience. "Equally determined," said he afterwards, "not to be the aggressor, or to suffer the flag of my country to be insulted with impunity, I gave a general order to fire." This time there was no defect in the ordnance or the gunnery of the American ship. The thunderous broadsides rang out at regular intervals, and the aim of the gunners was deliberate and deadly. It was too dark to see what effect the fire was having on the enemy, but in five minutes her responses began to come slowly and feebly. Unwilling to continue his attack on a ship evidently much his inferior in size and armament, Rodgers ordered the gunners to cease firing; but this had hardly been done when the stranger opened again. A second time the guns of the "President" were run out, and again they began their cannonade. The stranger was soon silenced again; and Commodore Rodgers hailed, that he might learn the name of his adversary. In answer came a voice from the other vessel, —

"We are his Majesty's ship ——." A gust of wind carried away the name, and Rodgers was still in doubt as to whom he had been fighting. Hoisting a number of bright lights in her rigging, that the stranger might know her whereabouts, the "President" stood off and on during the night, ready to give aid to the disabled ship in case of need.



COMMODORE RODGERS HAILS.

At early dawn every officer was on deck, anxious to learn the fate of their foe of the night before. Far in the distance they could see a ship, whose broken cordage and evident disorder showed her to have been the other party to the fight. A boat from the "President" visited the stranger, to learn her name and to proffer aid in repairing the damages received in the action. The ship proved to be the British sloop-of-war "Little Belt;" and her captain stated that she was much damaged in her masts, sails, rigging, and hull, and had been cut several times between wind and water. He declined the proffered aid, however, and sailed away to Halifax, the nearest British naval station. Commodore Rodgers took the "President" to the nearest American port.

When the "President" reached home, and the news of her exploit became known, the exultation of the people was great, and their commendations of Rodgers loud. "At last," they cried, "we have taught England a lesson. The insult to the 'Chesapeake' is now avenged." Rodgers protested that he had been forced unwillingly into the combat, but his admirers insisted that he had left port with the intention of humbling the pride of some British ship. Indeed, the letter of an officer on the "President," printed in "The New York Herald" at the time, rather supported this theory. "By the officers who came from Washington," wrote this gentleman, "we learn that we are sent in pursuit of a British frigate, who had impressed a passenger from a coaster. Yesterday, while beating down the bay, we spoke a brig coming up, who informed us that she saw the British frigate the day before off the very place where we now are; but she is not now in sight. We have made the most complete preparations for battle. Every one wishes it. She is exactly our force; but we have the "Argus" with us, which none of us are pleased with, as we wish a fair trial of courage and skill. Should we see her, I have not the least doubt of an engagement. The commodore will demand the person impressed; the demand will doubtless be refused, and the battle will instantly commence. . . . The commodore has called in the boatswain, gunner, and carpenter, informed them of all circumstances, and asked if they were ready for action. Ready, was the reply of each."

No consequences beyond an intensifying of the war spirit in America followed this rencounter. Before dismissing the subject, however, it is but fair to state that the account as given here is in substance Commodore Rodgers's version of the matter. The British captain's report was quite different. He insisted that the "President" fired the first shot, that the action continued nearly an hour, that it was his hail to which no attention was paid, and finally he intimated that the "President" had rather the worse of the encounter. The last statement is easily disproved, for the "President" was almost unscathed, and the only injury to her people was the slight wounding of a boy, in the hand. On the "Little Belt," thirty-one were killed or wounded. The other points led to a simple question of veracity between the two officers. Each government naturally accepted the report of its officer; and, so far as the governments were concerned, the matter soon passed into oblivion.

Not long after this episode, a somewhat similar occurrence took place, but was happily attended with no such serious consequences. The frigate "United States," cruising under the broad pennant of Commodore Decatur, fell in with two British ships near New York. While the commanders of the vessels were amicably hailing, a gun was suddenly fired from the battery of the "United States," owing to the carelessness of a gunner in handling the lanyard. It was a critical moment, for the British would have been justified in responding to the fire with broadsides. Happily, they were cool and discreet, and Decatur made such explanations as showed that no attack or insult was intended. This little incident is interesting, as showing the distrust of the British which led an American captain to keep his guns primed and cocked, while conversing with English men-of-war.

Another incident showed that the hatred of the British service that prevailed among seamen was a matter of deep-seated conviction. While the United States ship "Essex" was lying in an English port, it became known that one of her crew was a deserter from the British navy, and his surrender was immediately demanded. Although the man stoutly protested that he was an American, yet no proof could be shown; and, as the ship was in British waters, it was determined to surrender him. A British officer and squad of marines boarded the "Essex" and waited on the deck while the sailor went below to get his kit. Bitterly complaining of the hardness of his fate, the poor fellow went along the gun-decks until he passed the carpenter's bench. His eye fell upon an axe; and after a minute's hesitation he stepped to the bench, seized the axe in his right hand, and with one blow cut off the left. Carrying the severed member in his hand, he again sought the deck and presented himself, maimed, bleeding, and forever useless as a sailor, to the British officer. Astonished and horrified, that worthy left the ship, and the wounded man was sent to the sick-bay. The incident was a forcible commentary on the state of the British service at that time, and left a deep impression on the minds of all beholders.

In the next contest over deserters, however, the Americans rather secured the best of the argument. The "Constitution" was lying at anchor in Portsmouth roads, when one of the crew slily slipped overboard and swam down with the tide to the British ship "Madagascar" that lay at anchor near by. When he had reached the Englishman, he was too exhausted to speak; and the officers, supposing that he had fallen overboard accidentally, sent word to the "Constitution" that her man had been saved, and awaited the orders of his commander. The next morning a boat was sent down to the "Madagascar" to fetch the man back; but, to the astonishment of the visiting officer, he was told that the sailor claimed to be a British subject and wished to escape from the American service.

"Have you any evidence," asked the American officer of the British admiral, "beyond the man's own word, that he is an Englishman?"

"None whatever, sir," was the response, "but we are obliged to take his declaration to that effect."

The American officer returned to his ship, vowing vengeance on the harborers of the deserter. His opportunity came that very night.

In the dead watches of the night, when all was still on deck save the monotonous tramp of the sentries, there suddenly rang out on the still air the sharp crack of a musket. The officer of the deck rushed to see what was the matter, and was shown a dark object floating near the ship, at which a sentry had fired. A boat was lowered and soon came back, bringing in it a sailor who had deserted from the "Madagascar," and reached the "Constitution" by swimming. Capt. Hull asked the fellow his nationality.

"Sure, O'im a 'Merricun, your honor," he answered in a rich brogue that would have branded him as a Paddy in any part of the world. With a twinkle in his eye, Hull sent the Irishman below, and told the sailors to take good care of him.

Early in the morning, a boat came from the "Madagascar;" and a trim young lieutenant, clambering aboard the American frigate, politely requested that the deserter be given up. With great dignity, Capt. Hull responded that the man was a citizen of the United States, and should have protection. The visiting officer fairly gasped for breath. "An American!" he exclaimed. "Why, the man has never been out of Ireland except on a British man-of-war."

"Indeed!" responded Hull blandly. "But we have his statement that he is an American, and we are obliged to take his declaration to that effect." And the man was never given up.

During the day, two British frigates cast anchor so near the "Constitution" that Capt. Hull suspected them of hostile intentions, and moved his ship to a new anchorage. A frigate followed closely in her wake. At eight in the evening, Capt. Hull determined to meet the show of force with force. The drums beat, and the men were called to quarters. The battle-lanterns were lighted fore and aft. The tops were crowded with sailors, armed with short carbines, to pick off the men on the enemy's decks. Along the gun-deck stood the men at the guns; and an officer, describing the scene, says they took hold of the ropes as if they were about to jerk the guns through the ship's sides. All were enthusiastic over the prospect of the coming action.

"Now, then, my lads," said an officer to a group of sailors, "if a fight comes of this, it will be in the cause of you sailors; and I expect you to fight like men."

"Ay, ay, sir," was the response. "Let the quarter-deck look out for the colors, and we'll keep the guns going."

All the preparations for battle were made openly, and the attitude taken by the "Constitution" was an open challenge. No notice of it was taken by the British ship; and, after maintaining her hostile attitude for some time, the "Constitution" hoisted her anchor, and left the harbor.

The time of the formal declaration of war was now rapidly approaching. The long diplomatic correspondence between the two nations had failed to lead to any amicable solution of the difficulties that were fast urging them to war. Great Britain still adhered to her doctrine that a man once an Englishman was always an English subject. No action of his own could absolve him from allegiance to the flag under which he was born. Upon the trade of the United States with France, the English looked with much the sentiments with which, during our civil war, we regarded the thriving trade driven with the Confederacy by the British blockade-runners. Upon these two theories rested the hateful "right of search" and the custom of impressment.

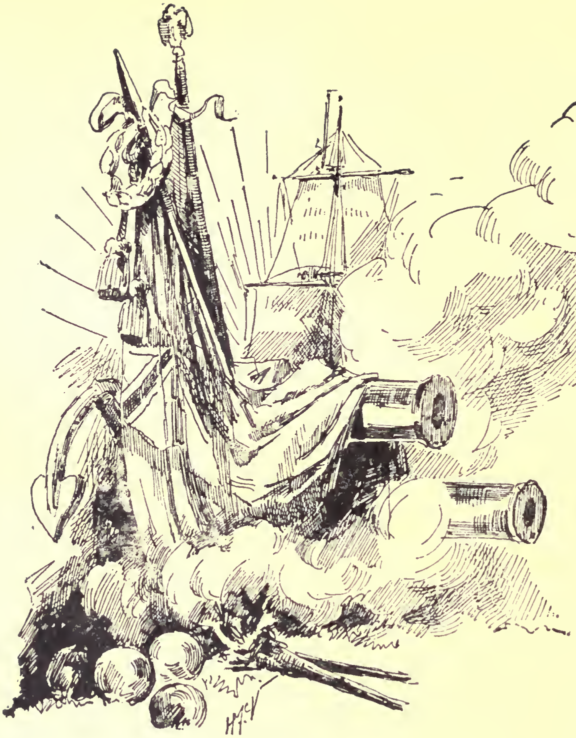
It is needless to say that the views of the United States on these questions were exactly contrary to those of the English. Such vital differences could, then, only be settled by war; and war was accordingly declared in June, 1812. It was a bold step for the young nation, but there was enough of plausibility in the English claims to make it evident that they could never be set aside by diplomacy; and so, with hardly a thought of the odds against her, the United States dashed in to win justice at the muzzles of her cannon.

That the odds were tremendous, is not to be denied. Of the military strength of the two nations, it is not the purpose of this book to treat. Indeed, a recountal of the land battles of the war of 1812 would hardly be pleasant reading for Americans. It was on the sea that our laurels were chiefly won. Yet, at the time of the declaration of war, the navy of the United States consisted of twenty vessels, of which the largest carried forty-four guns, and the majority rated under thirty. For years this navy had been a butt of ridicule for all the European naval powers. The frigate "Constitution" was scornfully termed by an English newspaper "a bunch of pine boards sailing under a bit of striped bunting." Not long after the publication of this insolent jeer, the "Constitution" sailed into an American port with a captured British frigate in tow. Right merrily then did the Americans boast of their "bunch of pine boards."

This miniature navy of the United States was about to be pitted against the greatest naval power of the world. The rolls of the navy of Great Britain bore at this time the names of over one thousand ships. Of these, no less than two hundred and fifty-four were ships-of-the-line, mounting over seventy-four guns each. Behind this great navy were the memories of long years of conquests, of an almost undisputed supremacy upon the ocean. Small wonder was it, then, that the British laughed at the idea of the Americans giving battle to their hitherto unconquered ships.

What, then, was the secret of the success which, as we shall see, attended the American arms on the sea? The answer is, that men, not ships, carried the day. Yet Great Britain had the more sailors on her muster-rolls. True, but they were only too often unwilling slaves. Instead of enlisting, like free men, they were hunted down like brutes and forced to enter the service. No sailor was safe from the press-gang, and even sober citizens were often kidnapped to serve the 'King' on the ocean. From the ships of other nations, from their homes and from taverns, the unlucky sailors were dragged away. Even in the streets of populous cities, they were not safe; and it was no uncommon sight to see pitched battles being fought between the press-gangs and sailors whom they were trying to capture. Generally, the inhabitants and landsmen sided with the victims; and a sailor running through the streets of the town would be given every assistance by people, who filled with obstacles the path of his pursuers. Could he reach the water-side, the fugitive would find every boat at his service; while his pursuers, on coming up, found every water-man very busy and very gruff. But the wonder is, that, with this unjust and repulsive system of impressments, the British sailors were so loyal, and fought with the dogged courage that they invariably showed.

In the American navy, on the contrary, the enlistments were voluntary. The service was popular, and the seamen entered it without the feeling of outraged liberty inspired by the British system. Officers were readily obtained from the ranks of the adventurous American navigators. Officers and men alike often brought into the service personal memories of British oppression; and this, with their free and independent spirit, enabled them to wage an unequal war with glorious results for the supporters of the stars and stripes.



CHAPTER IV

THE WAR ON THE OCEAN.—COMMODORE RODGERS'S CRUISE.—THE LOSS OF THE "NAUTILUS."—FIRST SUCCESS FOR THE BRITISH.—THE ESCAPE OF THE "CONSTITUTION."—THE "ESSEX" TAKES THE "ALERT."—THE "CONSTITUTION AND THE "GUERRIERE."

AT the time when the declaration of war was made public, a small squadron of United States vessels was lying in the port of New York, under the command of Commodore Rodgers The warlike tendency of the popular mind had long been evident, and the captain of every war-vessel had been for some time making active preparations for service. Some apprehension was felt in naval circles, lest the small size of the navy should lead the authorities to lay up the vessels in port during the continuance of the war. This apprehension was well founded; for not only had such a course been debated in the cabinet, but orders had been prepared, directing Commodore Rodgers to hold his vessels in port. This decision was actively opposed by the officers of the navy, who felt that, though inconsiderable in numbers, the United States navy could make a brave fight for the honor of the nation; and with one accord all protested against the action contemplated. Two officers, Capt. Bainbridge and Capt. Stewart, went to Washington and sought an interview with the Secretary of the Navy, Paul Hamilton, who assured them that the plans of the Government were well matured and would not be changed. The United States could not afford, said the secretary, that its few frigates and men-of-war should be snapped up by the enormous fleets of the British, as would surely be the case, if they ventured upon the ocean. But it was not intended to materially reduce the lists of naval officers. The frigates, with all their loose spars and top-hamper taken down, were to be anchored at the entrances of the principal harbors of the country, and operated as stationary batteries.

This prospect was far from agreeable to the two officers. It was intolerable for them to imagine the graceful frigates, with towering masts and snowy canvas, reduced to mere shapeless hulks, and left to guard the entrance of a placid harbor. Finding the secretary inexorable, they went to the President and put the case before him. They assured him, that, small though the list of American ships was, it bore the names of vessels able to cope with any thing of their class in the British navy. Both officers and seamen were proud of the service, and burned to strike a blow for its honor. President Madison seemed much impressed by their representations, and agreed to take the matter into consideration; and, if it seemed wise, to change the plan. But, before any definite action was taken by him, war was declared.

Within an hour after he had received news of the declaration of war, Commodore Rodgers had his squadron under way, and dropped down New York Bay to the ocean. Under his command were the flag-ship "President" of forty-four guns, the "Essex" thirty-two, and the "Hornet" eighteen. In the lower bay these vessels were joined by the "United States" forty-four, the "Congress" thirty-eight, and the "Argus" sixteen. On June 21, 1812, three days after the declaration of war, the whole squadron passed Sandy Hook, and stood out into the ocean.

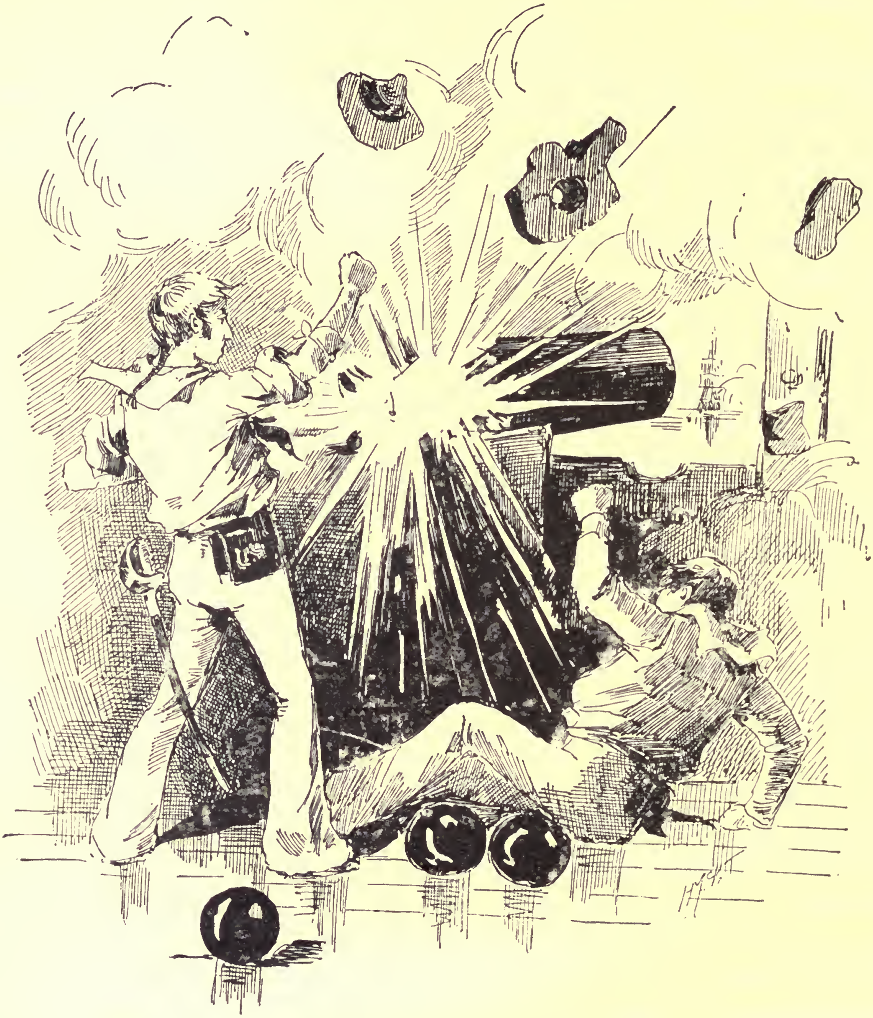
It is probable that the remarkable celerity of Commodore Rodgers's departure was due, in part, to the fear that the authorities would revive the obnoxious order laying up the ships in port. His chief object, however, was to overhaul a large fleet of British merchantmen that had recently left the West Indies, and, according to all calculations, should have been in the vicinity of New York at that time. All sail was accordingly crowded upon the ships, and the squadron set out in hot pursuit.

For two days the monotony of the horizon was broken by no sail; but on the third a ship was espied in the distance, which was made out to be an enemy's frigate, after which chase was made by the whole squadron. A fresh breeze was blowing, and both chase and pursuers were running free before the wind. As sail after sail was crowded upon the ships, the smaller vessels, with their lesser expanse of canvas, began to fall behind; and in a few hours the frigate "President" had gradually drawn away from the fleet, and was rapidly gaining on the enemy. The sail had been spied at six o'clock in the morning, and at four P.M. the flag-ship had come within gunshot of the chase. The wind then fell; and the chase, being long out of port and light, began to gain on her heavier adversary. Both vessels now began to prepare for a little gunnery. On the English vessel, which proved to be the "Belvidera," thirty-six, the sailors were busily engaged in shifting long eighteens and carronades to the stern, making a battery of stern-chasers mounting four guns.

The action was opened by a gun from the bow of the "President," sighted and fired by Commodore Rodgers himself; so that this officer may be said to have fired the first gun of the war. His shot was a good one, hulling the enemy. A second shot from one of the guns of the first division broke off the muzzle of one of the "Belvidera's" stern-chasers; and a third shot, fired by Commodore Rodgers, crashed into the stern of the chase, killing two men, and wounding several others. Certainly in their first action the Yankees showed no lack of skill in gunnery.

The chase was slow in responding to the fire; and although her commander, Capt. Byron, sighted the guns for the first few discharges himse his aim was by no means so good as that of the Americans. The Britis showed great energy, however, in defending their ship. Not content with the stern guns already mounted, they shifted to the stern ports two long eighteen-pounders on the main deck, and two thirty-two-pound carronades on the quarter-deck. With these they kept up a brisk fire, which soon became effective, many shots cutting the rigging of the "President," while one plunged down upon the deck, killing a midshipman and two or three men. But the superiority of the American gunnery was beginning to tell, when, at a critical moment, a main-deck gun, on the "President," burst with a stunning report; and the flying fragments killed or wounded sixteen men. The force of the explosion shattered the forecastle deck. Commodore Rodgers was thrown high into the air, and, falling heavily on the deck, suffered a painful fracture of the leg. The crew was at once thrown into confusion and almost panic. Every gun was looked upon with suspicion. Encouraged by this confusion, the enemy worked his stern guns with renewed vigor, and at the same time lightened his ship by cutting away boats and anchors, and starting fourteen tons of water. Thus lightened, she began to draw away from the "President;" perceiving which, the latter ship yawed several times, and let fly full broadsides at the escaping chase. The shot rattled among the spars of the "Belvidera," but the nimble topmen quickly repaired all damages; and the British ship slowly but steadily forged ahead. Seeing no hope of overtaking her, Rodgers ordered the chase abandoned; and the American squadron again took up its search for the fleet of British merchantmen.

But this, the first cruise of the United States navy in the war was destined to be a disappointment to all concerned. The key-note set by the affair just related — in which the "President" lost twenty-two men, and permitted her adversary to escape — was continued throughout the voyage. Always finding traces of the enemy they were seeking, the Americans never succeeded in overhauling him. One day great quantities of orange-peel, cocoanut-shells, and similar fragments of tropical fruits gave the jackies assurance of the proximity of the long-sought enemy, and urged them on to renewed energy and watchfulness. Then the master of an English letter-of-marque, captured by the "Hornet," reported that the day before he had passed a fleet of eighty-five sail, of which four were men-of-war. That night there was no room in the minds of the sailors for any thoughts other than those of big prize-money. But their golden dreams were never to be fulfilled; for, although the chase was continued until within a day's run of the English Channel, no sight of the Jamaica fleet was ever gained. Abandoning this chase, the squadron returned to Boston by a Southern route; and, although constantly in the very highway of commerce, few sails were sighted. When port was reached, the results of a cruise that had occupied seventy days amounted only to the capture of one letter-of-marque, seven merchantmen, and the recapture of one American ship. But Rodgers heard, that, while he had been scouring the ocean with such meagre results, events of more importance had occurred nearer home.



EXPLOSION ON THE "PRESIDENT."

The British ship "Belvidera," after her lucky escape from the "President," had made her way to Halifax, the chief naval station of Great Britain on the American coast. Her report was the first news of the declaration of war, for at that day news travelled slowly. Once alarmed, the British were prompt to act; and in a few days a squadron left Halifax in search of Commodore Rodgers. The force thus hurriedly gathered was quite formidable. The "Africa" of sixty-four guns, the "Shannon," thirty-eight, the "Guerriere," thirty-eight, the "Belvidera," thirty-six, and the "Æolus," thirty-two, made up the fleet despatched to chastise the headstrong Americans for their attempt to dispute with Great Britain the mastery of the ocean. Early in July, this force made its appearance off New York, and quickly made captures enough to convince the American merchantmen that a season in port was preferable to the dangers of the high seas in war-times. To this same fleet belongs the honor of the first capture of a war-vessel during the war; for the American brig "Nautilus," fourteen guns, was suddenly overhauled by the entire fleet, and captured after a plucky but unavailing attempt at flight.

Fourteen-gun brigs, however, were rather small game for a squadron like that of the British; and it is probable that His Britannic Majesty's officers were heartily glad, when, some days, later the United States frigate "Constitution" hove in sight, under circumstances which seemed certain to make her an easy prey to the five British ships.

It was on the 17th of July, 1812, that the "Constitution," after receiving a new crew at Annapolis, was standing northward under easy sail on her way to New York. About noon four sails were sighted on the horizon, and an hour later the appearance of a fifth sail was duly reported. A careful scrutiny of the strangers convinced Capt. Hull that they were men-of-war, although their nationality could not be determined. Night fell before the ships could come within hailing distance; and, though Hull set private signals, no answer was returned. When day broke, Hull found himself fairly surrounded by British frigates. In addition to the squadron which has been described as leaving Halifax, there was the captured "Nautilus" with her guns turned against her own nation, and a captured American schooner which had been likewise pressed into the service. Clearly the "Constitution" was outnumbered, and nothing was left for her but flight.

The events of that three days' chase are told with great minuteness in the log-book of the "Constitution," to which many of those on board have, in later publications, added more interesting personal reminiscences.

When the rising mists showed how completely the American frigate was hemmed in, hardly a breath of air was stirring. Although every sail was set on the ship, yet she had not steerage way; and Hull ordered out the boats, to pull the ship's head around and tow her out of range of her enemies. At the same time, gangs of sailors with axes cut away the woodwork about the cabin windows, and mounted two stern guns in the cabin and one on the upper deck. The enemy, in the mean time, were keeping up a vigorous fire, but without effect. Their ships were rapidly gaining, as they were enabled to set the boats of the whole squadron to towing the two foremost vessels. Hull saw that some new means of getting ahead must be devised.

Soundings were taken, and the ship found to be in twenty-six fathoms of water. All the available rope in the ship was then bent on to a kedge and carried far ahead, when the kedge was lowered to the bottom. The sailors then shipped their capstan-bars, and tramped about the capstan, until the ship was dragged up to the kedge, which was then hoisted and again carried ahead and let fall. This manœuvre was repeated several times with marked success; for the "Constitution" was rapidly drawing away from her pursuers, who could not discover her means of propulsion. Out of sight of land as they were, the British did not for some time suspect the true cause of the sudden speed of the fugitive. When, after long scrutiny through their marine-glasses, they finally did discover the stratagem, the "Constitution" was far ahead; and though the pursuers adopted the same device, yet their awkwardness was so great, that even the superior force they were enabled to employ did not bring them up to their chase.

While the ships were thus being urged on by towing, kedging, and occasionally by sweeps, an intermittent fire was kept up by the British, and responded to by the "Constitution" from her stern ports. The guns which had been mounted by the Americans in the cabin, they were soon forced to abandon, as the explosions threatened to blow out the whole stern frame. With the stern-chasers on the gun-deck, however, a constant fire was maintained, in the hopes of crippling the enemy by a lucky shot.

For more than forty-eight hours the chase maintained this aspect of monotony. A dead calm prevailed the greater part of the time. Occasionally, light breezes filled the sails, and wafted the ships ahead for a few minutes; then, dying away, left the sea unruffled, and the sails flapping idly against the masts. British historians concur with those of our own country, in saying that the "Constitution," in seizing the advantages of the breeze, showed far better seamanship than did her enemies. While the British vessels lay to, to pick up their boats, the "Constitution" forged ahead, picking up her boats while under way. Later in the chase, the British totally abandoned their boats, and, when the American frigate had fairly escaped them, went about for some days picking up such boats as were found drifting on the broad ocean.

The morning of the second day of the chase dawned with a light breeze ruffling the water, and filling out the sails of the ships. Before the breeze died away, which it did in a few hours, the "Constitution" had gained on her pursuers so that she led them by more than four miles. Then the calm again held the ships quiet; and again the Americans saw their enemies closing in upon them by the aid of sweeps, and towing with their boats. There was little rest for the crew of the American frigate. On the gun-deck, about the carriages of the great cannon, lay such of the men as were not assigned to duty in the boats or at the capstan. Wearied with the constant strain, they fell asleep as soon as relieved from active duty; though they knew that from that sleep they might be awakened to plunge into the fierce excitement of desperate battle. Exhausted as the men were, their officers were forced to endure a still more fearful strain. No sleep came to the eyelids of Capt. Hull, throughout the chase. Now encouraging the men, now planning a new ruse to deceive the enemy, ever watchful of the pursuing ships, and ready to take advantage of the slightest breath of air, Capt. Hull and his able first lieutenant Morris showed such seamanship as extorted admiration even from the British, who were being baffled by their nautical skill.

By skilful manœuvring, the Americans managed to keep to the windward of their enemies throughout the chase; and to this fact the success of Capt. Hull's most astute stratagem was due. Ever alert for any sign of a coming breeze, he saw on the water far to windward that rippling appearance that betokens the coming of a puff. Hull determined to utilize it for himself, and, if possible, trick the British so that they would lose all benefit of the breeze. The clouds that were coming up to windward seemed to threaten a squall, and driving sheets of rain were rapidly advancing toward the ship. With great ostentation, the "Constitution" was made ready for a severe gale. The enemy could see the nimble sailors taking in sail, and furling all the lighter canvas. Then the driving rain swept over the ship, and she was shut out of sight. Immediately all was activity in the tops of the British frigates. Reefs were rapidly taken in the larger sails, while many were closely furled. All forsook their course, and steered in different directions in preparation for the coming squall, which, indeed, was far less violent than the action of the "Constitution" seemed to indicate. But the shrewd Yankees on that craft, protected from spying British eyes by the heavy rain, were now shaking out the reefs they had just set; and under full sail the ship was soon flying away towards home. After an hour of driving thunder-shower, the clouds passed by; and the wall-like edge of the shower could be seen moving rapidly away before the wind. The tars on the "Constitution" watched eagerly to see the British fleet appear. Farther and farther receded the gray curtain, and yet no ships could be seen. "Where are they?" was the thought of every eager watcher on the deck of the "Constitution." At last they appeared, so far in the distance as to be practically out of the chase. Two were even hull down; while one was barely visible, a mere speck on the horizon.

Though now hopelessly distanced, the British did not give up the pursuit, but held valiantly on after the American frigate. She had so long been within their very grasp that it was a bitter disappointment for them to be balked of their prey. But, as the wind now held, the American gained on them so rapidly that at last they unwillingly abandoned the chase; and, disbanding the fleet, each ship set off on an individual cruise, in the hopes that the enemy which had shown such ability in flight when overpowered would not deign to fly if encountered by a single hostile ship. This expectation was fully realized some weeks later, when the "Constitution" fell in with the British frigate "Guerriere."

Thus, after a chase of more than sixty-four hours, the "Constitution" evaded her pursuers, and made her way to Boston. Although they reaped no glory by their labors, the British did not come out of the chase altogether empty-handed. As the course of the vessels was along the New England coast, they were in the direct path of American commerce; and more than one wretched coaster fell into their clutches. At one time, a fine, full-rigged ship, flying the stars and stripes, came within sight; and the British, to lure her to her destruction, hoisted the American flag over all their vessels. But Hull was a match for them at strategy; and he promptly set the British colors at his masthead, and began so vigorous a cannonade that the stranger concluded that a merchantman had no business in that quarter, even though the Americans did appear to be rather in the majority.

By his able seamanship in this chase Capt. Hull gained for himself a national reputation. The newspapers of the day vied with each other in pointing out the manœuvres in which he had excelled his enemies, — how he had picked up his boats while under way, though the enemy were forced to cut theirs adrift; how he had come out of the chase without injury, and after parting with only a few gallons of water, though a less cool-headed commander would have thrown overboard guns, ammunition, and every thing movable, in the face of so great a danger. A modest sailor, as well as a skilful one, Capt. Hull showed himself to be; for, while the popular adulation was at its height, he inserted a card in the books of the Exchange Coffee-House at Boston, begging his friends to "make a transfer of a great part of their good wishes to Lieut. Morris and the other brave officers and crew under his command, for their very great exertions and prompt attention to orders while the enemy were in chase."

Leaving the "Constitution" thus snugly in port at Boston, we will turn aside to follow the fortunes of a ship, which, though belated in getting out to sea, yet won the honor of capturing the first British war-vessel taken during the war.

When Commodore Rodgers set sail from New York with his squadron, in the fruitless pursuit of the fleet of Jamaica men, he left in the harbor the small frigate "Essex," under the command of Capt. David Porter. The ship was thoroughly dismantled, — stripped of her rigging, her hold broken out, and provided neither with armament, ammunition, nor crew. Her captain, however, was a man of indomitable energy; and by dint of much hard work, and constant appeals to the authorities at Washington, he managed to get his ship in order, and leave the harbor within a fortnight after the departure of the squadron under Rodgers's command.

The "Essex" was a small frigate, lightly sparred, rating as a thirty-two-gun ship, but mounting twenty-six guns only, of which six were twelve-pounders, and the remainder carronades of thirty-two pounds. A carronade is a short cannon of large calibre, but of very short range. Capt. Porter protested vigorously against being furnished with a battery so useless except at close quarters: but his protests were unheeded; and the "Essex" put to sea, trusting to her ability to get alongside the enemy, where her carronades would be of some use.

Among the midshipmen who bunked, messed, and skylarked together in the steerage of the "Essex," was one lad whose name in later days was to be inscribed on the roll of the greatest naval heroes of history. David Glasgow Farragut was a child of seven years of age when he was adopted by Capt. Porter, and began his training for a naval career. In 1810 the boy secured his appointment of midshipman; and now, in 1812, we find him enrolled among the "young gentlemen" who followed the fortunes of the "Essex." In those days the midshipmen were often mere boys. Farragut himself was then but eleven years old. But, boys as they were, they ordered the hardy old tars about, and strutted the streets when on shore-leave, with all the dignity of veterans.

That the discipline of the "Essex" was of the strictest, and that the efficiency of her crew was above criticism, we have the testimony of Farragut himself to prove. "Every day," he writes, "the crew were exercised at the great guns, small arms, and single stick; and I may here mention the fact, that I have never been on a ship where the crew of the old "Essex" was represented, but that I found them to be the best swordsmen on board. They had been so thoroughly trained as boarders, that every man was prepared for such an emergency, with his cutlass as sharp as a razor, a dirk made by the ship's armorer out of a file, and a pistol."

Hardly were the Highlands of Navesink lost to sight below the horizon, when Porter began to receive evidences that his cruise was to be a lucky one. Several brigs were captured, and sent into New York; but the tars of the "Essex" were beginning to grow weary of small game, and hoped, each time a sail was sighted, that it might be a British man-of-war. At last a small squadron hove into sight, the appearance of which seemed to indicate that the jackies might smell gunpowder to their hearts' content before the next day.

It was late at night when the strange fleet was sighted; and the

"Essex" was soon running down upon them, before a fresh breeze. Although the moon was out, its light was obscured by dense masses of cloud, that were driven rapidly across the sky; while over the water hung a light haze, that made difficult the discovery of objects at any distance. The "Essex" soon came near enough to the squadron to ascertain that it was a fleet of British merchantmen and transports convoyed by a frigate and bomb-vessel. The frigate was at the head of the line; and the "Essex," carefully concealing her hostile character, clapped on all sail and pressed forward, in the hopes of bringing on an action. After passing the hindermost transport, however, the American ship was hailed by a second transport, which soon suspected her hostile character and threatened to give the alarm. Instantly the ports of the "Essex" were knocked out, the guns trained on the enemy, and the transport was ordered to haul out of the line at once, and silently, under penalty of being fired into. The defenceless ship complied, and was at once taken possession of, and the soldiers on board were transferred to the "Essex." This operation took so much time, that, by the time it was concluded, day dawned over the ocean; and the attack upon the British frigate was abandoned.

Again the "Essex" continued her cruise in search of an enemy worthy of her metal. For two or three days she beat about the ocean in the usual track of ships, without sighting a single sail. The ship had been so disguised, that the keenest-eyed lookout would never have taken her for a ship-of-war. The top-gallant masts were housed, the ports of the gun-deck closed in, and her usually trim cordage and nicely squared yards were now set in a way that only the most shiftless of merchant skippers would tolerate. Not many days passed before the enemy fell into the trap thus set for him.

When on the 13th of August Capt. Porter learned that a sail to windward, apparently a British man-of-war, was bearing down upon the "Essex," he carried his little bit of acting still further. Instead of the great crowd of agile sailors that spring into the rigging of a man-of-war, at the order to make sail, only a handful, in obedience to Porter's orders, awkwardly set on the "Essex" all the sail she would carry. Two long, heavy cables dragging in the water astern so retarded the ship, that the stranger, coming down gallantly, thought he had fallen in with a lumbering old American merchantman, which was making frantic, but futile, efforts to escape.

Had the British captain been able to look behind the closed ports of the "Essex," he would have formed a very different idea of the character of his chase. He would have seen a roomy gun-deck, glistening with that whiteness seen only on the decks of well-kept men-of-war. Down either side of the deck stretched a row of heavy carronades, each with its crew of gunners grouped about the breech, and each shotted and primed ready for the opening volley. From the magazine amidships, to the gun-deck, reached a line of stewards, waiters, and cooks, ready to pass up cartridges; for on a man-of-war, in action, no one is an idler. Active boys were skurrying about the deck, barefooted, and stripped to the waist. These were the "powder monkeys," whose duty it would be, when the action opened, to take the cartridges from the line of powder-passers and carry it to the guns. On the spar-deck, only a few sailors and officers were visible to the enemy; but under the taffrail lay crouched scores of blue-uniformed jackies, with smooth-faced middies and veteran lieutenants, ready to spring into the rigging at the word of command, or to swarm over the side and board the enemy, should the gunwales of the vessels touch.

All this preparation, however, was unknown to the "Englishman," who came boldly on, doubting nothing that the "Essex" would that day be added to his list of prizes. As he drew nearer, the American sailors could see that their foe was much their inferior in size and armament; and the old tars who had seen service before growled out their dissatisfaction, that the action should be nothing but a scrimmage after all. In a few minutes, the bold Britons gave three ringing cheers, and let fly a broadside at the "Essex." In an instant the ports of the sham merchantman were knocked out; and, with a war-like thunder, the heavy carronades hurled their ponderous missiles against the side of the assailant. The astonished Englishmen replied feebly, but were quickly driven from their posts by the rapidity of the American fire; and, in eight minutes after the action was opened, the British hauled down their flag. The captured ship proved to be the sloop-of-war "Alert," mounting twenty eighteen-pounder carronades. The boarding officer found her badly cut up, and seven feet of water in the hold. The officers were transferred to the "Essex," and the "Alert" taken in tow. Circumstances, however, forced the Americans to part in a very few days.

The chief cause which led to the separation of the two vessels was an incipient mutiny, which was discovered by Midshipman Farragut, and was only averted by the perfect discipline of the American crew. An exercise to which the greatest attention was given was the "fire-drill." When the cry of fire was raised on the ship, every man seized his cutlass and blanket, and went to quarters as though the ship were about to go into action. Capt. Porter was accustomed, that his men might be well prepared for any emergency, to raise this cry of fire at all hours of the night; and often he caused a slight smoke to be created in the hold, further to try the nerves of his men. Shortly after the "Alert" was captured, and while the "Essex" was crowded with prisoners, some of the captives conspired to seize the ship, and carry her to England. One night, as Farragut was sleeping in his hammock, a strange feeling of fear came over him; and he opened his eyes to find the coxswain of the captain's gig of the "Alert" standing over him with a pistol in his hand. The boy knew him to be a prisoner, and, seeing him armed, was convinced that something was wrong. Expecting every moment to be killed, he lay still in his hammock, until the man turned on his heel and walked away. Then Farragut slipped out, and ran to the captain's cabin to report the incident. Porter rushed upon the berth-deck in an instant. "Fire! fire!" shouted he at the top of his voice; and in an instant the crew were at their quarters, in perfect order. The mutineers thought that a bad time for their project, and it was abandoned. The next day the prisoners were sent on board the "Alert," and that vessel sent into St. Johns as a cartel.

The capture of the "Alert" reflected no great glory upon the Americans, for the immense superiority of the "Essex" rendered her success certain. It is, however, of interest as being the first capture of a British war-vessel. The action made the honors easy between the two nations; for while the Americans had the "Alert," the British were captors of the brig "Nautilus." This equality was not of long duration, however; for an action soon followed which set all America wild with exultation.

After her escape from the British fleet, the "Constitution" remained at Boston only a few days, and then set out on a cruise to the eastward along the New England coast. Bad luck seemed to follow her, and she had reached a point off Cape Sable before she made a prize. Here two or three prizes of little value were taken; and an English sloop-of-war was forced to relinquish an American brig, which had been recently captured. Shortly afterwards, a Salem privateer was overhauled, the captain of which reported an English frigate cruising in the neighborhood; and Capt. Hull straightway set out to discover the enemy.

The frigate which had been sighted by the Salem privateer, and for which Hull was so eagerly seeking, was the "Guerriere," a thirty-eight-gun ship commanded by Capt. Dacres. With both ship and captain, Capt. Hull had previously had some little experience. The "Guerriere" was one of the ships in the squadron from which the "Constitution" had so narrowly escaped a few weeks before, while Capt. Dacres was an old acquaintance. A story current at the time relates, that, before the war, the "Guerriere" and the "Constitution" were lying in the Delaware; and the two captains, happening to meet at some entertainment on shore, fell into a discussion over the merits of their respective navies. Although even then the cloud of war was rising on the horizon, each was pleasant and good-natured; and the discussion assumed no more serious form than lively banter.

"Well," said Hull at last, "you may just take good care of that ship of yours, if ever I catch her in the 'Constitution.'"

Capt. Dacres laughed good-humoredly, and offered to bet a sum of money, that in the event of a conflict his confident friend would find himself the loser.

"No," said Hull, "I'll bet no money on it; but I will stake you a hat, that the 'Constitution' comes out victorious."

"Done," responded Dacres; and the bet was made. War was soon declared; and, as it happened, the two friends were pitted against each other early in the hostilities.

It was not long after the American frigate parted from the privateer when the long-drawn hail of "Sail ho-o-o!" from the lookout aloft announced the discovery of another vessel. The course of the "Constitution" was at once shaped toward the stranger. In half an hour she was made out to be a frigate, and from her actions was evidently anxious to come alongside the American ship. As more than an hour must elapse before the ships could come together, Capt. Hull made his preparations for action with the greatest deliberation. The top-gallant sails were furled, and the lighter spars lowered to the deck. Through their glasses, the officers could see the enemy making similar preparations, and waiting deliberately for the "Constitution" to come down.

At five o'clock in the afternoon the two ships were rapidly nearing, and the drums on the American frigate beat to quarters. Then followed the rush of barefooted men along the deck, as they ran hastily, but in perfect order, to their stations. As the roll of the drums died away, the shrill voices of the boyish midshipmen arose, calling off the quarter-bills, and answered by the gruff responses of the men at their posts. Every man, from the cook to the captain, knew his place, and hurried to it. The surgeon, with his assistants, descended to the cock-pit. The carpenter and his mates made ready their felt-covered plugs, for stopping holes made by the enemy's shot. The topmen clambered to their posts in the rigging, led by the midshipmen who were to command them. The line of powder-passers was formed; and the powder-monkeys gave up skylarking, and began to look sober at the thought of the business in hand.

The "Guerriere" was not behindhand in her preparations for action. Capt. Dacres had suspected the character of the American vessel, from the first moment she had been sighted. On board the English frigate was Capt. William B. Orne, a Marblehead sailor who had been captured by the "Guerriere" some days before. "Capt. Dacres seemed anxious to ascertain her character," wrote Capt. Orne, shortly after the battle, "and after looking at her for that purpose, handed me his spy-glass, requesting me to give him my opinion of the stranger. I soon saw, from the peculiarity of her sails and her general appearance, that she was without doubt an American frigate, and communicated the same to Capt. Dacres. He immediately replied, that he thought she came down too boldly for an American; but soon after added, 'The better he behaves, the more credit we shall gain by taking him.'

"The two ships were rapidly approaching each other, when the 'Guerriere' backed her main topsail, and waited for her opponent to come down and commence the action. He then set an English flag at each masthead, beat to quarters, and made ready for the fight.

"When the strange frigate came down to within two or three miles distant, he hauled upon the wind, took in all his light sails, reefed his topsails, and deliberately prepared for action. It was now about five in the afternoon, when he filled away and ran down for the 'Guerriere.' At this moment Capt. Dacres said politely to me, 'Capt. Orne, as I suppose you do not wish to fight against your own countrymen, you are at liberty to retire below the water-line.' It was not long after this, before I retired from the quarter-deck to the cock-pit." It may be well here to supplement Capt. Orne's narrative by the statement that Capt. Dacres, with a chivalric sense of justice not common in the British navy of that day, allowed ten American sailors who had been impressed into his crew to leave their quarters and go below, that they might not fight against their country. Though an enemy, he was both gallant and generous.

The action was opened by the "Guerriere" with her weather broadside; the shot of which all falling short, she wore around, and let fly her port broadside, sending most of the shot through her enemy's rigging, though two took effect in the hull. In response to this, the "Constitution" yawed a little, and fired two or three of her bow-guns; after which the "Guerriere" again opened with broadsides. In this way the battle continued for about an hour; the American ship saving her fire, and responding to the heavy broadsides with an occasional shot.

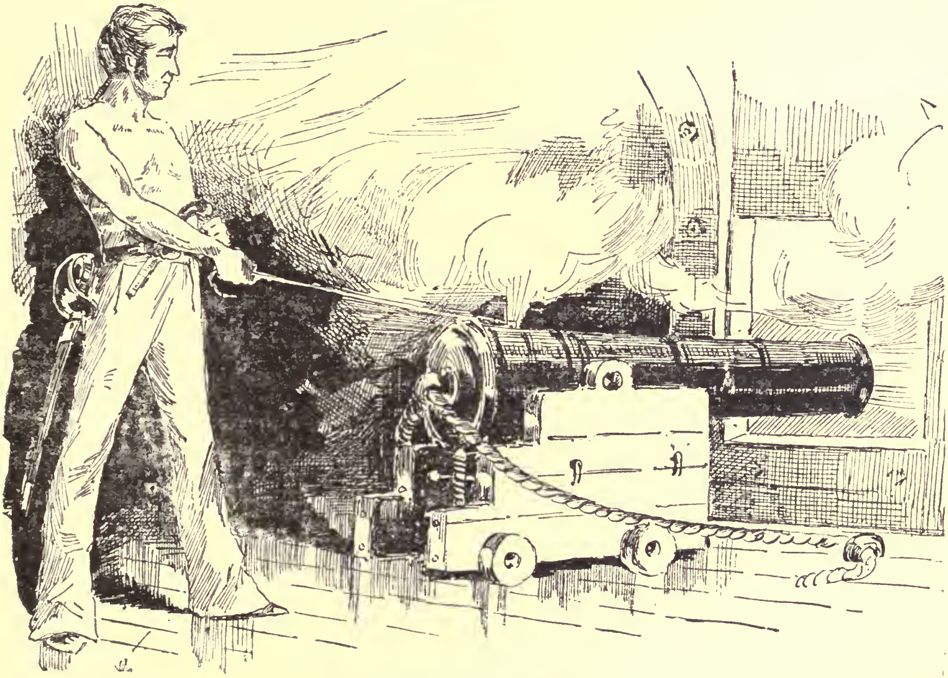
During this ineffectual firing, the two ships were continually drawing nearer together, and the gunners on the "Constitution" were becoming more and more restive under their inaction. Capt. Hull was pacing the quarter-deck with short, quick steps, trying to look cool, but inwardly on fire with excitement. As the shot of the enemy began to take effect, and the impatience of the gunners grew more intense, Lieut. Morris, the second in command, asked leave to respond with a broadside.

"Not yet," responded Capt. Hull with cool decision. Some minutes later, the request was repeated, and met with the same response, while the captain never ceased his pacing of the deck. When within about half pistol-shot, another broadside came from the "Guerriere." Then the smothered excitement in Hull's breast broke out.

"Now, boys, pour it into them!" he shouted at the top of his lungs, gesticulating with such violence that the tight breeches of his naval uniform split clear down the side. Lieut. Morris seconded the captain in cheering on the crew.

"Hull her, boys! Hull her!" he shouted; and the crew, catching up the cry, made the decks ring with shouts of "Hull her!" as they rapidly loaded and let fly again.

The effect of their first broadside was terrific. Deep down in the cock-pit of the "Guerriere," Capt. Orne, who had been listening to the muffled thunder of the cannonade at long range, suddenly "heard a tremendous explosion from the opposing frigate. The effect of her shot seemed to make the 'Guerriere' reel and tremble, as though she had received the shock of an earthquake. Immediately after this, I heard a tremendous shock on deck, and was told that the mizzen-mast was shot away. In a few moments afterward, the cock-pit was filled with wounded men."


"HULL HER, BOYS!"

Though in his retreat in the cock-pit the captive American could hear the roar of the cannon, and see the ghastly effects of the flying missiles, he could form but a small idea of the fury of the conflict which was raging over his head. Stripped to the waist, and covered with the stains of powder and of blood, the gunners on the two ships pulled fiercely at the gun-tackle, and wielded the rammers with frantic energy; then let fly the death-dealing bolt into the hull of an enemy only a few yards distant. The ships were broadside to broadside, when the Englishman's mizzen-mast was shot away, and fell, throwing the topmen far out into the sea. The force of the great spar falling upon the deck made a great breach in the quarter of the ship; and, while the sailors were clearing away the wreck, the "Constitution" drew slowly ahead, pouring in several destructive broadsides, and then luffed slowly, until she lay right athwart the enemy's bow. While in this position, the long bowsprit of the "Guerriere" stretched far across the quarter-deck of the American ship, and was soon fouled in the mizzen-rigging of the latter vessel. Then the two ships swung helplessly around, so that the bow of the Englishman lay snugly against the port-quarter of the Yankee craft. Instantly, from the deck of each ship rang out the short, sharp blare of the bugle, calling away the boarders, who sprang from their guns, seized their heavy boarding caps and cutlasses, and rushed to the side. But a heavy sea was rolling and tossing the two frigates, so that boarding seemed impossible; and, as Dacres saw the crowd of men ready to receive his boarders, he called them back to the guns. Although each party stuck to its own ship, the fighting was almost hand to hand. Pistols were freely used; and from the tops rained down a ceaseless hail of leaden missiles, one of which wounded Capt. Dacres slightly. So near to each other were the combatants, that the commands and the cries of rage and pain could be heard above the deep-toned thunder of the great guns and the ceaseless rattle of the musketry. The protruding muzzles of the guns often touched the sides of the opposing ship; and when the cannon were drawn in for loading, the sailors on either side thrust muskets and pistols through the ports, and tried to pick off the enemy at his guns.

While the fight was thus raging, a cry of "Fire!" horrified every one on the "Constitution." Flames were seen coming from the windows of the cabin, which lay directly beneath the bow-guns of the "Guerriere." The fire had been set by the flash from the enemy's cannon, so close were the two ships together. By the strenuous exertions of the men on duty in the cabin, the flames were extinguished, and this, the greatest of all dangers, averted. Shortly after, the gun which had caused the trouble was disabled by a skilful shot from one of the Yankee's guns.

While the flames in the cabin were being extinguished, the Americans were making a valiant attempt to board and Lieut. Morris with his own hands was attempting to lash the two ships together. Abandoning this attempt, he leaped upon the taffrail, and called upon his men to follow him. Lieut. Bush of the marines, and Mr. Alwyn, were soon at the side of the intrepid officer, when, at a sudden volley of musketry from the British, all three fell back, poor Bush dead, and the two others badly wounded. The ships then drifted asunder; and the "Guerriere's" foremast was shot away, and dragged down the mainmast with it in its fall. The shattered ship now lay a shapeless hulk, tossing on the waves, but still keeping a British ensign defiantly flying from the stump of her fallen mizzen-mast.

The "Constitution" drew away, firing continually, and soon secured a raking position; seeing which, the British hauled down their colors. Lieut. Read was sent on board the prize, and, on the appearance of Capt. Dacres, said, —

"Capt. Hull presents his compliments, sir, and wishes to know if you have struck your flag."

Dacres looked significantly at the shattered masts of his ship, and responded dryly, —

"Well, I don't know. Our mizzen-mast is gone, our main-mast is gone; and I think, on the whole, you may say that we have struck our flag."

After looking about the ship, the boarding officer stepped to the side, to return to his own vessel. Before leaving, he said to Capt. Dacres, —

"Would you like the assistance of a surgeon, or surgeon's mate, in caring for your wounded?"

Dacres looked surprised, and responded, —

"Well, I should suppose you had on board your own ship business enough for all your medical officers."

"Oh, no!" answered Read. "We have only seven wounded, and they have been dressed long ago."

Dacres was astounded, as well he might be; for on the decks of his ship lay twenty-three dead or mortally wounded men, while the surgeons were doing their best to alleviate the sufferings of fifty-six wounded, among whom were several officers. Indeed, the ship looked like a charnel-house. When Capt. Orne, freed by the result of the battle, came on deck, he saw a sight that he thus describes: "At about half-past seven o'clock, I went on deck, and there beheld a scene which it would be difficult to describe. All the 'Guerriere's' masts were shot away; and, as she had no sails to steady her, she was rolling like a log in the trough of the sea. Many of the men were employed in throwing the dead overboard The decks were covered with blood, and had the appearance of a ship's slaughter-house. The gun-tackles were not made fast; and several of the guns got loose, and were surging from one side to the other. Some of the petty officers and seamen got liquor, and were intoxicated; and what with the groans of the wounded, the noise and confusion of the enraged survivors on board of the ill-fated ship, rendered the whole scene a perfect hell."

For some time after the "Guerriere" had been formally taken possession of, it seemed as though the "Constitution" would have to fight a second battle, to keep possession of her prize. A strange sail was seen upon the horizon, bearing down upon the "Constitution" in a way that seemed to threaten hostilities. Again the drums beat to quarters, and once again the tired crew went to their stations at the guns. But the strange ship sheered off, and the gallant crew were not forced to fight a second battle. All hands then set to work to remove the prisoners from the "Guerriere," which was evidently in a sinking condition.

In the first boat-load from the sinking ship came Capt. Dacres, who was politely shown into Capt. Hull's cabin. Unclasping his sword from its place at his hip, the conquered seaman handed it silently to Capt. Hull. The victor put it gently back, saying, —

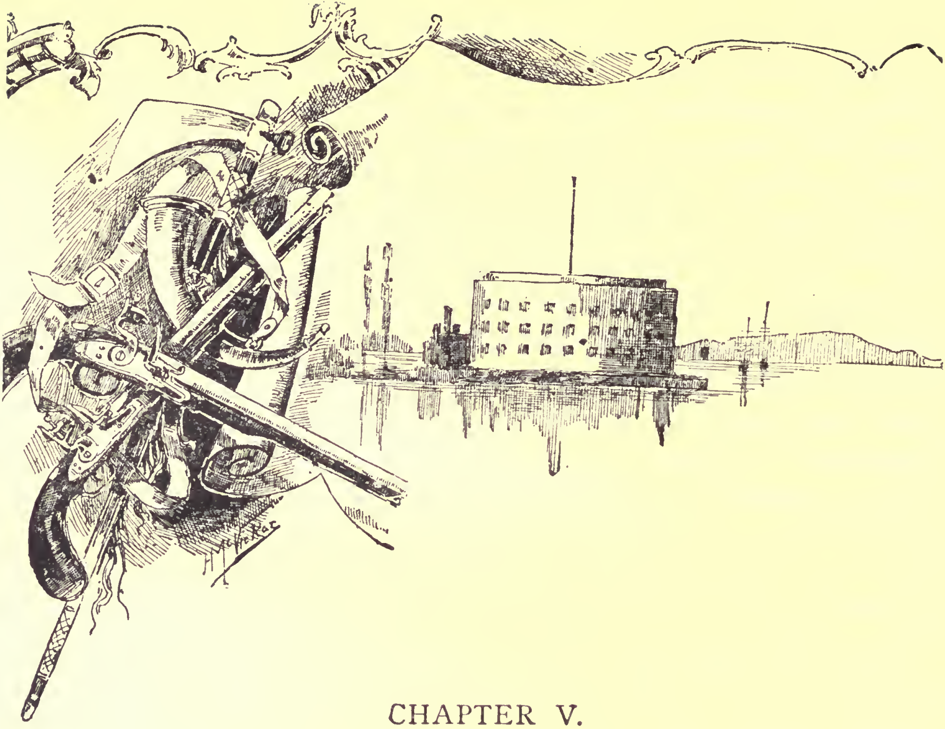
"No, no, captain: I'll not take a sword from one who knows so well how to use it. But I will trouble you for that hat."

For a moment a shade of perplexity passed over the brow of the British captain; then he recollected the wager of a year or two before, and all was clear again. Unfortunately, the veracious chronicler who has handed this anecdote down to modern times has failed to state whether the debt was duly paid.

After some hours of hard work with the boats, the last of the prisoners, with their effects, were brought on board the "Constitution." Torches were then set to the abandoned frigate; and the sailors watched her blaze, until the fire reached her magazine, and she vanished in the midst of a tremendous explosion. Then, leaving behind her the floating mass of ruin, the "Constitution" headed for Boston, where she arrived after a few days of sailing.

Great was the excitement and exultation aroused among the people by the arrival of the noble ship with her prisoners. She had, indeed, come at a time when the public mind required cheering; for from the interior came the reports of British successes by land, along the Canadian frontier about Detroit, and for weeks the papers had been unable to record any success for the American arms. But the report of the engagement with the "Guerriere" changed wholly the tide of popular feeling. Boston — the city which at the declaration of war had hung its flags at half-mast, in token of mourning and humiliation — Boston welcomed the conquerors with an ovation like to a triumph in the days of imperial Rome.

When the ship came up the harbor, she was met and surrounded by a great flotilla of gayly decorated boats; while the flags on the surrounding vessels were dipped in salutation as the war-scarred veteran made her stately way to the wharf. Here a volunteer artillery company was assembled; and, as the ship came up, they fired a national salute, which was returned from the guns so lately employed in defending the national honor. Quarters had been prepared for Capt. Hull in the city; and, as he landed, he found the streets through which he must pass decked with bright bunting, and crowded with people. His progress was accompanied by a great wave of cheers; for, as the people saw him coming, they set up a shout, which was not ended until he had passed from sight. At night came a grand banquet to the officers of the ship, at which six hundred sat down to the feast. The freedom of the city was presented to the captain; and at a later date came the news of sword presentations from citizens of New York, plate from the people of Philadelphia, and gold medals from Congress. Amid all the exultation, the rash arrogance of the British writers was not forgotten; and many a bumper was emptied to the success of the frigate described by British journalists as "a bunch of pine boards under a bit of striped bunting."



CHAPTER V.

AN INTERNATIONAL DEBATE.—THE "WASP" AND THE "FROLIC."—THE "UNITED STATES" AND THE "MACEDONIAN."—OVATIONS TO THE VICTORS.

THE rejoicing over the success of the "Constitution" had not died away in the United States when the English newspapers began to appear with elaborate articles, showing just why the battle had terminated as it did. "The 'Constitution' is the crack frigate of the American navy," cried the apologists; but to this the Americans retorted by quoting the British description of the ship as "a bunch of pine boards." The "Guerriere" was an "old worn-out frigate," responded the English, returning to the charge. "She was on her way to Halifax to refit, when attacked." Again they were refuted by their own statements; for, but a month before, the "Guerriere" was said to be "able to drive the insolent striped bunting from the seas." Throughout the discussion, the shrewdness of the Americans enabled them to meet the arguments of the British at every point; but not until the charge was made, that the "Constitution" was chiefly manned by British sailors, did the people become thoroughly in earnest in the war of words.

Such a charge as this was adding insult to injury. Was not the British navy full of Americans who were forced against their will to serve against their own country, while the few Englishmen on the "Constitution" were enlisted with their own consent? For Capt. Dacres to say that his ship was weakened by allowing the ten Americans to go below, and then beaten by the efforts of the Englishmen on the "Constitution," was merely tantamount to saying that the victory hinged on the fact that Americans would not fight against their own country, while Englishmen did so willingly. But for Great Britain to exclaim against the American navy because it harbored a few Englishmen, was the rankest hypocrisy. So said the American journalists of the day; and, in support of their statement, they printed long letters from American seamen impressed into and held in the British naval service. One writes that he was impressed into his British Majesty's ship "Peacock," in 1810, and after serving two years he heard of the declaration of war. After a consultation with two fellow-seamen, both Americans, all decided to refuse to serve longer, claiming to be prisoners of war. But the captain under whom they were enrolled looked upon the matter in a different light. He heard their claim, pronounced it a bit of "confounded insolence," and straightway ordered that they be put in irons. After some hours for meditation in "the brig," the three sailors were taken to the gangway, stripped naked, and tied up, while a sturdy boatswain's mate laid on a dozen and a half blows of the cat. Later, when the ship went into action with a United States vessel, the three sailors asked to be sent below, that they might not fight against their own countrymen; but the captain's sole response was to call up a midshipman, and order him to do his duty. This duty proved to consist in standing over the three malcontents with a loaded pistol, threatening to blow out the brains of the first who should flinch from his work.

Three sailors were impressed after the war had begun. Learning that the ship on which they found themselves was to cruise upon the American station, they with one accord refused to serve. The response to this was "five dozen lashes well laid on." Being still mutinous, they received four dozen lashes two days later, and after the lapse of two more days were flogged with two dozen more. But all the beating to which they were subjected could not compel them to serve against their country; and they were accordingly ironed and thrown into "the brig," where they lay for three months. When released from "the brig," they found the ship at London. Here they heard of the glorious victory of the "Constitution," and determined to celebrate it. By ripping up their clothing into strips, and sewing the strips together, a rude American flag was made; and with the most astonishing audacity the three sailors hung this emblem over a gun, and gave three cheers for the stars and stripes. This naturally brought them another flogging.

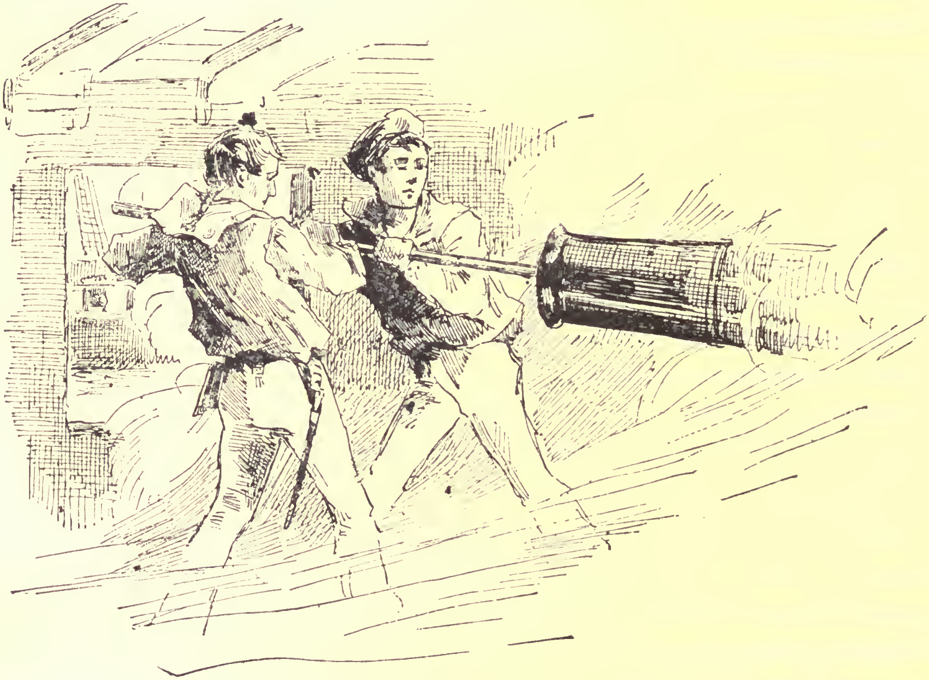
Flogging, however, could not always be resorted to in order to bring American sailors into subjection. It is estimated, that, when war was declared, there were five times as many American seamen in the British navy as were in the whole navy of the United States. To attempt to keep this immense body of disaffected seamen in order by the lash, would have been impracticable; and soon the custom arose of sending the more refractory tars into confinement at some English prison. Dartmoor prison was for a time the principal place of detention for pressed men; but, as it soon became crowded, it was given over to prisoners of war, and the hapless seamen were sent to languish in dismantled ships, known as "hulks." These hulks were generally old naval vessels, dismasted and stripped of all their fittings. Anchored midstream in tidal rivers, the rotting hulks tugged at their rusty chains, as the tide rose and fell, groaning in their bondage, and seeming as much imprisoned as the wretched sailors by whom they were tenanted. The captives lived in misery and squalor. Crowded together in stifling quarters between decks, they were the prey of vermin of all kinds. Their miserable diet, and lack of proper exercise, caused the scurvy in its most repulsive forms to break out among them. The only breath of fresh air they could obtain was when, in gangs, they were allowed to go on deck, and pace up and down under the watchful eyes of soldiery; then back to the crowded quarters below, to swelter in summer or freeze in winter. Such was their punishment for the crime of being loyal to their country.

Careful estimates show that at this time there were at least twenty thousand American sailors in the British navy, each one of whom was liable at any moment to be ordered into this inhuman captivity. A British official document of 1812 reported that 2,548 American seamen had been imprisoned for refusing to serve against their country. Hundreds of these were sent to the living death in the hulks. Was it any wonder that, with such facts before their eyes, Americans grew indignant at hearing that the victory of the "Constitution" had been won by the prowess of British seamen? But before many days had passed, a victory was recorded for the stars and stripes, which not even the acuteness of an English naval historian could ascribe to any cause other than the naval superiority of the victor.

This was the capture, by the United States sloop-of-war "Wasp," of the British sloop-of-war "Frolic," after a battle ever memorable for the extraordinary dash and bravery shown by each combatant. In size, the "Wasp" was one of the inferior vessels of the United States navy. In her architecture and appointments, however, she was the pride of the navy, and was often cited as a model ship of her class. Her armament consisted of sixteen thirty-two-pounder carronades, and two "long twelves."

When the war broke out, the "Wasp" had just left the coast of Europe, bearing despatches from the foreign diplomatic representatives of the United States to the Government. It was accordingly near the middle of October before the sloop had been refitted, and, with a crew of one hundred and thirty-five men, left the Delaware, on her first cruise against the English. Her commander was Capt. Jacob Jones, who had served in the war with Tripoli, and had himself been a captive among the barbarians of Northern Africa.

After a few days' cruising, with one or two unimportant captures, a bunch of sails was sighted at some distance. The most careful examination failed to reveal the character of the strangers, and Jones determined to run down cautiously toward the squadron, to reconnoitre. The wind was blowing fiercely at the time, and a heavy sea was running, from the effects of a gale of the day before, in which the "Wasp" lost her jib-boom, together with two sailors who were upon it. As the vessel bore down upon the strangers, Jones could see through his marine glasses that they were a convoy of merchantmen, under the protection of a British sloop-of-war. The merchantmen were evidently armed, and some seemed to carry as many as twelve guns. Deeming it unwise to attack at that moment, Capt. Jones kept on a course parallel with that of the enemy, during the remainder of that day and through the night. With the break of day, every officer of the "Wasp" was on deck, and all eyes were turned towards the quarter in which the Englishmen should be found. There, sure enough, they were. Six merchant ships and a bluff little brig, the port-holes in the sides of which showed her to be a war-vessel rating as a sloop. Signs of activity on board made it evident that the Englishmen had caught sight of the vessel which had been dogging them for the last day, and were making ready to give her battle. The British, too, had suffered in the gale, and the sailors could be seen shipping a new main-yard, and setting new topsails. On the "Wasp," the jackies were hard at work, getting in a spar to take the place of the jib-boom, which had been lost in the storm. Both ships were under short canvas, for the wind was still high. Instead of the English ensign, a Spanish flag fluttered from the halliards of the Englishman, — an unnecessary ruse to draw on an adversary already seeking a conflict.



LOADING.

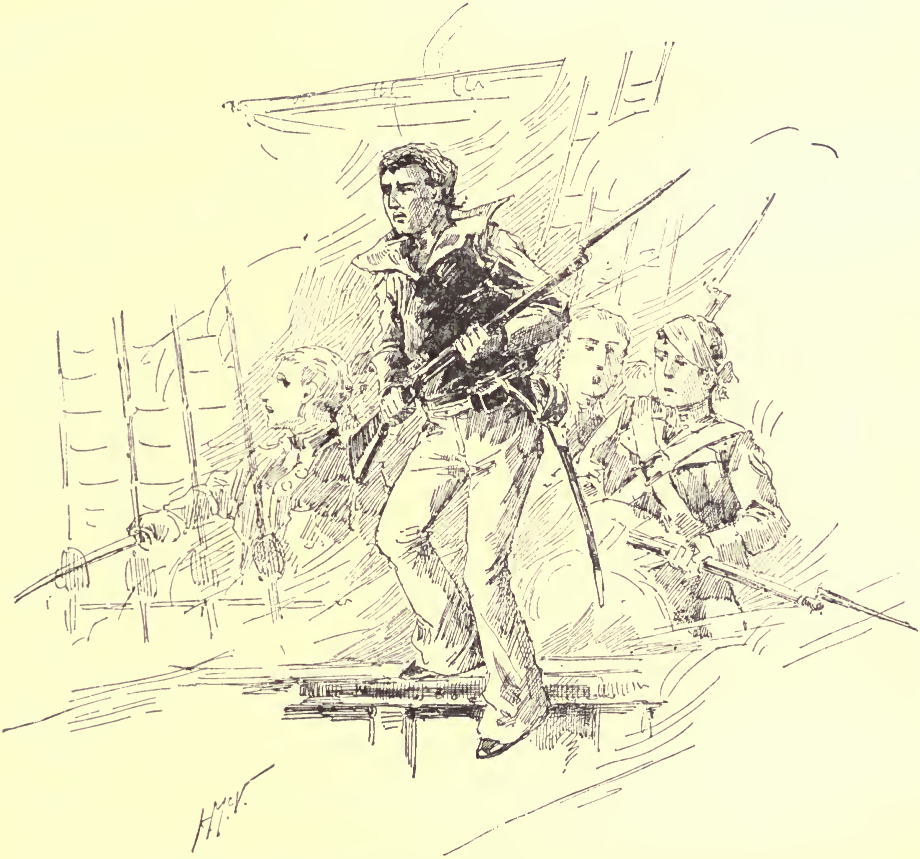
It was half-past eleven in the morning when the action began. The day was an ideal October morning at sea, — cool, clear, and a breeze blowing fresh and constantly stiffening. The two vessels were running on the starboard tack, not sixty yards apart. As they ploughed through the waves, great clouds of spray dashed over the bows ; and every now and then a wave would sweep over the forecastle, drenching the jackies as they stood at their quarters. As they sped along, the two ships exchanged broadsides, the "Frolic" firing three to the "Wasp's" two. After every broadside, the gunners cheered as they saw the damage done by their fire. When the state of the sea is considered, it seems marvellous that the broadsides should have done any execution whatever. The vessels were rolling terribly, now wallowing in the trough of the sea, and again tossed high on the crest of some enormous wave. At one instant the muzzles of the guns would be pointed toward the skies, then actually submerged under the waves, from which they rose dripping, to be loaded and fired before another dip should soak the charge. Yet, with all this rolling to spoil their aim, the gunners of both ships pointed their pieces with most destructive effect. Within five minutes from the time of opening fire, the main top-mast of the "Wasp" was shot away, and hung tangled in the rigging, despite the active efforts of the topmen, headed by the nimble midshipmen, to clear away the wreck. This greatly hampered the movements of the American vessel ; and when, a few minutes later, the gaff and the main top-gallant mast fell, the chances of the American ship seemed poor indeed. The effects of the "Wasp's" fire were chiefly to be seen in the hull of her antagonist ; but the first twenty minutes of the fight seemed to give the Englishman every chance of victory, since his fire had so cut away the rigging of the "Wasp" that she became unmanageable. It is said that the difference between the execution done by the two batteries was due to the fact that the British fired as their ship was rising on the crest of the wave, while the Americans fired from the trough of the sea, sending their shot into the hull of the enemy.

While the fight was raging, the two ships were constantly drawing nearer together ; and just as it seemed as though the destruction wrought in the "Wasp's" rigging would inevitably lead to her defeat, the two vessels fouled. For an instant they lay yard-arm to yard-arm, and at that very moment the American gunners poured in a terrific broadside. So close were the two vessels to each other, that, in loading, the rammers were shoved up against the sides of the "Frolic." Before the gunners of the "Frolic" could respond to this broadside, their ship swung round so that her bow lay against the "Wasp's" quarter ; and her bowsprit passed over the heads of Capt. Jones and his officers as they stood on the quarter-deck. That was the moment for a raking volley; and with deadly aim the Americans poured it in, and the heavy iron bolts swept the decks of the "Frolic" from stem to stern.

This turn in the tide of battle fairly crazed with excitement the sailors of the "Wasp." With ringing cheers they applauded the success of the last volley, and, springing into the hammock-nettings, called loudly for their officers to lead them on board the English ship. From the quarter-deck, Capt. Jones, with shouts and gestures, strove to hold back the excited men until another broadside could be given the enemy. But the enthusiasm of the sailors was beyond all control. All at once, they saw a sailor from New Jersey, named Jack Lang, spring on a gun, cutlass in hand, ready to board. All were about to follow him, when Capt. Jones called him down. Only for a minute did Jack's sense of duty overcome his enthusiasm; and then, remembering that he had once been impressed on the "Frolic," his rage blazed up, and in an instant he was clambering over the nettings, calling for followers. Capt. Jones saw that the ardor of his crew was beyond his control, and ordered the bugler to call away the boarders. Headed by their officers, the bold tars swarmed over the nettings, and through the tangled rigging, to the deck of the enemy's ship. Each man clutched his cutlass viciously, for he felt that a desperate conflict was imminent. But when they dropped upon the deck of the "Frolic," a most unexpected spectacle met their eyes.

The broad deck stretched out before them, untenanted save by a few wounded officers near the stern, and a grim old British seaman at the wheel. Instead of the host of armed men with whom the boarders expected to dispute the possession of the ship, they saw before them only heaps of dead sailors lying about the guns which they had been serving. On the quarter-deck lay Capt. Whinyates and Lieut. Wintle, desperately wounded. All who were unhurt had fled below, to escape the pitiless fire of the American guns, and the unerring aim of the sailors stationed in the "Wasp's" tops. Only the old helmsman stood undaunted at his post, and held the ship on her course, even while the Americans were swarming over the nettings and clambering down the bowsprit. The colors were still flying above the ship; but there was no one left, either to defend them or to haul them down, and they were finally lowered by the hands of Lieut. Biddle, who led the boarding party.

No action of the war was so sanguinary as this short conflict between two sloops-of-war. The "Frolic" went into action with a crew of one hundred and ten men, fully officered. When the colors were hauled down, only twenty men were uninjured. Every officer was wounded, and of the crew thirty lost their lives. They had stood to their guns with the dogged courage of the English sailor at his best, and had been fairly mowed down by the destructive fire of the Americans. On the "Wasp," the loss of life was slight. The shot of the enemy took effect in the rigging chiefly. The three sailors who were killed were topmen at their posts, and the five wounded were almost all stationed in the rigging.


READY TO BOARD.

The Americans were not destined to enjoy their triumph long. Shattered though the "Frolic" was, Lieut. Biddle, with a prize-crew, took charge of her, and was in hopes of taking her safely to port; but his plan was rudely shattered by the appearance of an English frigate, only a few hours after the action ceased. For the "Frolic" to escape, was out of the question. Both her masts had gone by the board shortly after her flag was struck; and, when the new enemy hove in sight, the prize-crew was working hard to clear from her decks the tangled mass of rigging, wreckage, and dead bodies, that made the tasks of navigation impossible. The ship was rolling like a log, in the trough of the sea, and was an easy prize for an enemy of even less strength than the man-of-war which was then bearing down upon her.

The vessel which came rapidly down before the wind was the "Poictiers," a British seventy-four-gun ship, which would have been more than a match for the little "Wasp," even though the latter had been fresh and ready for battle, instead of shattered by desperate fight. Seeing no chance for a successful resistance, Capt. Jones determined upon flight, and ordered all hands aloft, to make sail. But the sails when shaken out were found to have been cut to pieces by the "Frolic's" shot; and the "Poictiers" soon came alongside, and changed the triumph of the Americans to defeat.

Though Capt. Jones and his gallant crew were thus deprived of their hard-won conquest, they received their full meed of praise from their countrymen. They were soon exchanged, voted twenty-five thousand dollars prize-money by Congress, and lauded by every newspaper and legislative orator in the country. The song-writers of the day undertook to celebrate in verse the famous victory, and produced dozens of songs, of which the following stanza may be taken for a fair sample:—

"Like the fierce bird of Jove the 'Wasp' darted forth,
  And he the tale told, with amazement and wonder.
She hurled on the foe from her flame-spreading arms,
  The fire-brands of death and the red bolts of thunder.
And, oh! it was glorious and strange to behold
  What torrents of fire from her red mouth she threw;
And how from her broad wings and sulphurous sides,
  Hot showers of grape-shot and rifle-balls flew!"

Let us now turn to Commodore John Rodgers, whose unlucky cruise at the opening of the war we have already noted. Having refitted his squadron in the port of New York, he set sail on a second cruise, leaving behind him the "Hornet." Again he seemed to have fallen upon unprofitable times, for his ships beat up and down in the highway of commerce without sighting a single sail. After several days of inaction, it was determined to scatter the squadron; and to this end the frigate "United States," Commodore Decatur, and the sixteen-gun brig "Argus," Capt. Sinclair, left the main body of ships and started off on a cruise in company. After the two ships left the main body, Commodore Rodgers met with better success, capturing a Jamaica packet with two hundred thousand dollars in her hold, and chasing a British frigate for two hours, but without overhauling her.

In the mean time, the "Argus" had parted from her consort, and was cruising to the eastward on her own account, meeting with fair success. During her cruise she captured six merchantmen, and was herself chased by a British squadron. This chase was almost as memorable as that of the "Constitution;" for the little brig was hotly pursued for three days and nights, and, to escape her pursuers, was obliged to cut away her boats and anchors, and part with every thing movable save her guns. She escaped at last, however, and was for many months thereafter a source of continual annoyance to the commerce of the enemy.

After parting with the "Argus," the "United States" had made her course toward the south-east, in the hopes of intercepting some of the British West-Indiamen. But what the plucky sailors would consider better luck fell to the lot of the frigate.

At dawn on a bright Sunday morning, the lookout of the "United States" descried a sail about twelve miles away, on the weather-beam. Sail was crowded on the American frigate, and, urged along by a rattling breeze, she made towards the stranger. As the distance between the ships lessened, and the rigging of the stranger showed her to be a frigate, the enthusiasm among the gallant tars of the "United States" grew apace. Visions of battle, of glory, and, above all, of resultant prize-money, arose in their minds; and their shouts could be heard by the crew of the distant frigate before the two vessels came within range of each other.

The vessel toward which the "United States" was advancing was the

"Macedonian," a British frigate rating thirty-eight guns, but said to have been carrying forty-nine at this time. She had for some time been reckoned a crack ship of her class in the British navy, and her crew was in admirable training. From her quarter-deck and forecastle groups of officers and seamen were watching the on-coming of the American frigate. One of the powder-monkeys, named Samuel Leech, of the British ship, told graphically and simply the story of that day's doings on the "Macedonian."

"Sunday (Dec. 25, 1812) came, and it brought with it a stiff breeze," so runs the powder-monkey's tale. "We usually made a sort of holiday of this sacred day. After breakfast it was common to muster the entire crew on the spar-deck, dressed as the fancy of the captain might dictate,—sometimes in blue jackets and white trousers, or blue jackets and blue trousers; at other times in blue jackets, scarlet vests, and blue or white trousers; with our bright anchor-buttons glancing in the sun, and our black, glossy hats ornamented with black ribbons, and the name of our ship painted on them. After muster we frequently had church-service read by the captain; the rest of the day was devoted to idleness. But we were destined to spend the rest of the sabbath just introduced to the reader in a very different manner.

"We had scarcely finished breakfast before the man at the masthead shouted 'Sail, ho!'

"The captain rushed upon deck, exclaiming, 'Masthead, there!'

"'Sir?'

"'Where away is the sail?'

"The precise answer to this question I do not recollect; but the captain proceeded to ask, 'What does she look like?'

"'A square-rigged vessel, sir,' was the reply of the lookout.

"After a few minutes, the captain shouted again, 'Masthead, there!'

"'Sir?'

"'What does she look like?'

"'A large ship, sir, standing toward us.'

"By this time, most of the crew were on deck, eagerly straining their eyes to obtain a glimpse of the approaching ship, and murmuring their opinions to each other on her probable character.

"Then came the voice of the captain, shouting, 'Keep silence, fore and aft!'

"Silence being secured, he hailed the lookout, who to his question of 'What does she look like?' replied, "A large frigate bearing down upon us, sir.'

"A whisper ran along the crew, that the stranger ship was a Yankee frigate. The thought was confirmed by the command of 'All hands clear the ship for action, ahoy!' The drum and fife beat to quarters, bulkheads were knocked away, the guns were released from their confinement, the whole dread paraphernalia of battle was produced; and, after the lapse of a few minutes of hurry and confusion, every man and boy was at his post ready to do his best service for his country, except the band, who, claiming exemption from the affray, safely stowed themselves away in the cable tier. We had only one sick man on the list; and he, at the cry of battle, hurried from his cot, feeble as he was, to take his post of danger. A few of the junior midshipmen were stationed below on the berth-deck, with orders, given in our hearing, to shoot any man who attempted to move from his quarters.

"As the approaching ship showed American colors, all doubt of her character was at an end. 'We must fight her,' was the conviction of every breast. Every possible arrangement that could insure success was accordingly made. The guns were shotted, the matches lighted; for, although our guns were all furnished with first-class locks, they were also furnished with matches, attached by lanyards, in case the lock should miss fire. A lieutenant then passed through the ship, directing the marines and boarders — who were furnished with pikes, cutlasses, and pistols — how to proceed if it should be necessary to board the enemy. He was followed by the captain, who exhorted the men to fidelity and courage, urging upon their consideration the well-known motto of the brave Nelson, '*England expects every man to do his duty.*' In addition to all these preparations on deck, some men were stationed in the tops with small-arms, whose duty it was to attend to trimming the sails, and to use their muskets, provided we came to close action. There were others, also, below, called sail-trimmers, to assist in working the ship, should it be necessary to shift her position during the battle."

Thus, with her men at their quarters, her guns primed, and matches lighted, the "Macedonian" bore down to open the action. On the "United States," very similar scenes were being enacted. In some respects, the American frigate was a more formidable ship than the adversary she was about to engage. Her battery consisted of fifty-four guns, and some were of heavier calibre than those of the "Macedonian." Her crew, too, was rather larger than that of her adversary. But, in most respects, the ships were well matched. Indeed, the commanders of the two ships had met before the opening of the war, and, in conversation, agreed that their vessels were well fitted to test the comparative valor of Yankee and English sailors. Capt. Carden of the "Macedonian" had asked Decatur what would be the probable result, if the two ships were to meet in battle.

"Why, sir," responded the American captain, "if we meet with forces that might be fairly called equal, the conflict would be severe; but the flag of my country on the ship I command shall never leave the staff on which it waves, as long as there is a hull to support it."

Such sentiments as this were ever in the heart of the gallant Decatur, whose service in the war of 1812 was but the continuation of his dashing career during the war with Tripoli. A captain of such ardent bravery could not fail to inspire his crew with the same enthusiasm and confidence.

In the crew of the "United States" were many young boys, of ages ranging from twelve to fourteen years. At that time many a lad received his warrant as midshipman while still in his tenth year; and youngsters who wished to join the navy as "ship's boys," were always received, although sometimes their extreme youth made it illegal for their names to be formally enrolled upon the roster of the crew. Such was the station of little Jack Creamer, a ten-year-old boy, who had been serving on the ship for some weeks, although under the age at which he could be legally enlisted. When Jack saw the English frigate looming up in the distance, a troubled look came over his face, and he seemed to be revolving some grave problem in his mind. His comrades noticed his look of care, and rallied him on what they supposed to be his fear of the coming conflict. Jack stoutly denied this charge, but said he was anxious to speak to the captain before going into action. An old quartermaster marched him up to the quarter-deck, and stood waiting for Capt. Decatur's attention. In a moment the captain noticed the two, and said cheerily, —

"Well, Jack, what's wanting now?"

Touching his hat, the lad replied, "Commodore, will you please to have my name put down on the muster-roll?"

"Why, what for, my lad?"

"So that I can draw my share of the prize-money, when we take that Britisher, sir."

Amused and pleased with the lad's confidence in the success of the "United States" in the coming battle, Decatur gave the necessary order; and Jack went back to his post with a prouder step, for he was now regularly enrolled.

The two ships were now coming within range of each other, and a slow, long-distance cannonade was begun, with but little effect; for a long ground-swell was on, and the ships were rolling in a manner fatal to the aim of the gunners. After half an hour of this playing at long bowls, the Englishman's mizzen top-mast was shot away; and the cannon-balls from the "States" whizzed through the rigging, and splashed into the water about the "Macedonian," in a way that proved the American gunners had the range, and were utilizing it. Capt. Carden soon saw that at long range the American gunners were more than a match for his men, and he resolved to throw prudence to the winds; and, disdaining all manœuvring, bore straight down on the American ship that lay almost stationary on the water, pouring in rapid and well-aimed broadsides.

Though a gallant and dashing movement, this course led to the defeat of the English ship. The fire of the Americans was deadly in its aim, and marvellous in rapidity. So continuous was the flashing of the discharges from the broadside ports, that the sailors on the "Macedonian" thought their adversary was on fire, and cheered lustily. But the next instant their exultation was turned to sorrow; for a well-directed shot cut away the mizzen-mast, which fell alongside, suspended by the cordage.

"Huzza, Jack!" cried the captain of a gun on the "United States." "We've made a brig of her."

"Ay, ay, my lad," said Decatur, who stood near by; "now aim well at the main-mast, and she'll be a sloop soon."

A few minutes later, the captain shouted to the nearest gunner, "Aim at the yellow streak. Her spars and rigging are going fast enough. She must have a little more hulling."

This order was immediately passed along the gun-deck, until every gunner was striving his utmost to plant his shot in the hull of the enemy. The effect was terrible. The great missiles crashed through the wooden sides of the English frigate, and swept the decks clear of men. She was coming down on the American bravely, and with manifest intention of boarding; but so skilfully was the "United States" manœuvred, and so accurate and rapid was her fire, that the "Macedonian" was unable to close, and was fairly cut to pieces, while still more than a pistol-shot distant. The "United States," in the mean time, was almost unscathed. The aim of the English gunners was usually too high, and such shots as took effect were mainly in the rigging. After pounding away at the "Macedonian" until the chocks of the forecastle guns on that ship were cut away, her boats cut to pieces, and her hull shattered with more than one hundred shot-holes, the American ship drew away slightly. The British thought she was in retreat, and cheered lustily, but were soon undeceived; for, after a little manœuvring, the "United States" ranged up under her adversary's lee, securing a raking position. Before a broadside could be fired, the British hauled down their flag; and the action was ended, after just an hour and a half of fighting.

The slaughter on the British frigate had been appalling. From the official accounts, we glean the cold reports of the numbers of the killed and wounded; but for any picture of the scene on the decks of the defeated man-of-war, we must turn to such descriptions as have been left by eye-witnesses. Sailors are not much given to the habit of jotting down the descriptions of the many stirring scenes in which they play parts in their adventurous careers; and much that is romantic, much that is picturesque, and much that is of historic value, has thus been lost to history. But of the details of the action between the "Macedonian" and "United States," the sailor-lad already quoted has left an account, probably as trustworthy as should be expected of a witness in his situation. He was stationed at one of the guns on the main-deck; and it was his duty, as powder-boy, to run to the magazine for powder for his gun. Before the entrance to the magazine was a heavy wooden screen, pierced with a hole through which the cartridges were passed out to the fleet-footed powder-monkeys, as they rushed up for more powder. Each boy, on getting his cartridge, wrapped it in his jacket, that no stray spark might touch it, and dashed off at full speed for his gun, quickly returning for further supplies.

With the men all standing pale and silent at the guns, the "Macedonian" came on doggedly towards her foe. Three guns fired from the larboard side of the gun-deck opened the action; but the fire was quickly stopped by the gruff order from the quarter-deck, "Cease firing: you are throwing away your shot!" Then came the roar of the opening volley from the American frigate.

"A strange noise such as I had never heard before next arrested my attention," wrote the English sailor-lad. "It sounded like the tearing of sails just over our heads. This I soon ascertained to be the wind of the enemy's shot. The firing, after a few minutes' cessation, recommenced. The roaring of cannon could now be heard from all parts of our trembling ship; and, mingling as it did with that of our foes, it made a most hideous noise. By and by I heard the shot strike the sides of our ship. The whole scene grew indescribably confused and horrible. It was like some awfully tremendous thunder-storm, whose deafening roar is attended by incessant streaks of lightning, carrying death in every flash, and strewing the ground with the victims of its wrath; only in our case the scene was rendered more horrible than that by the presence of torrents of blood, which dyed our decks. Though the recital may be painful, yet, as it will reveal the horrors of war, and show at what a fearful price the victory is won or lost, I will present the reader with things as they met my eye during the progress of this dreadful fight. I was busily supplying my gun with powder, when I saw blood suddenly fly from the arm of a man stationed at our gun. I saw nothing strike him: the effect alone was visible; and in an instant the third lieutenant tied his handkerchief round the wounded arm, and sent the poor fellow below to the surgeon.

"The cries of the wounded now rang through all parts of the ship. These were carried to the cock-pit as fast as they fell, while those more fortunate men who were killed outright were immediately thrown overboard. As I was stationed but a short distance from the main hatchway, I could catch a glance at all who were carried below. A glance was all I could indulge in; for the boys belonging to the guns next to mine were wounded in the early part of the action, and I had to spring with all my might to keep three or four guns supplied with cartridges. I saw two of these lads fall nearly together. One of them was struck in the leg by a large shot; he had to suffer amputation above the wound. The other had a grape or canister sent through his ankle. A stout Yorkshire man lifted him in his arms, and hurried with him to the cock-pit. He had his foot cut off, and was thus made lame for life. Two of the boys stationed on the quarter-deck were killed. They were both Portuguese. A man who saw one killed afterwards told me that his powder caught fire, and burnt the flesh almost off his face. In this pitiable situation the agonized boy lifted up both hands, as if imploring relief, when a passing shot instantly cut him in two."

But the narrative of this young sailor, a boy in years, is almost too horrible for reproduction. He tells of men struck by three or four missiles at once, and hacked to pieces; of mangled sailors, mortally wounded, but still living, thrown overboard to end their sufferings; of the monotonous drip of the blood on the deck, as desperately wounded men were carried past. The brave seaman who left his bed of sickness for the post of duty had his head carried away by a cannon-ball. The schoolmaster who looked after the education of the midshipmen was killed. Even a poor goat, kept by the officers for her milk, was cut down by a cannon-ball, and, after hobbling piteously about the deck, was mercifully thrown overboard. And this was Sunday, Christmas Day!

The spot amidships where our sailor-lad was stationed must have been the hottest station in the whole ship. Many years later, as Herman Melville, the author of several exciting sea-tales, was walking the deck of a man-of-war with an old negro, "Tawney," who had served on the "Macedonian," the veteran stopped at a point abreast the main-mast. "This part of the ship," said he, "we called the slaughter-house, on board the 'Macedonian.' Here the men fell, five and six at a time. An enemy always directs its shot here, in order to hurl over the mast, if possible. The beams and carlines overhead in the 'Macedonian' slaughter-house were spattered with blood and brains. About the hatchways it looked like a butcher's stall. A shot entering at one of the port-holes dashed dead two-thirds of a gun's crew. The captain of the next gun, dropping his lock-string, which he had just pulled, turned over the heap of bodies, to see who they were; when, perceiving an old messmate who had sailed with him in many cruises, he burst into tears, and taking the corpse up in his arms, and going to the side with it, held it over the water a moment, and eying it, cried, 'O God! Tom'—. 'Hang your prayers over that thing! Overboard with it, and down to your gun!' The order was obeyed, and the heart-stricken sailor returned to his post."

Amid such scenes of terror, the British tars fought on doggedly, cheering loudly as they worked their guns, but not knowing why they cheered; for the officers, at least, could see how surely the battle was going against them. When the "United States" drew away to repair damages, the British officers held a consultation on the quarter-deck. They could not but see that their position was hopeless; and, knowing all further resistance to be folly, the flag was hauled down. To the pride of the officers, the surrender was doubtless a severe blow. But Sam Leech remarks pithily, that to him "it was a pleasing sight; for he had seen fighting enough for one Sabbath, — more, indeed, than he wished to see again on a week-day."

Decatur at once hailed, to learn the name of his prize, and then sent off a boat with Lieut. Allen to take possession. He found the decks of the ship in a fearful state. Many of the crew had found liquor, and were drinking heavily. Others were throwing the dead into the sea, carrying the wounded below, and sprinkling the deck with hot vinegar, to remove the stains and odor of blood. The dead numbered forty-three, and sixty-one were wounded. An eye-witness of the terrible spectacle writes of it: "Fragments of the dead were distributed in every direction, the decks covered with blood, — one continued, agonizing yell of the unhappy wounded. A scene so horrible of my fellow-creatures, I assure you, deprived me very much of the pleasure of victory." Yet, with all this terrific destruction and loss of life on the "Macedonian," the "United States" was but little injured; and her loss amounted to but seven killed, and five wounded. Indeed, so slight was the damage done to the American ship, that an hour's active work by her sailors put her in trim for a second battle.

While Lieut. Allen was examining the muster-rolls of the "Macedonian," a sailor pushed his way toward the quarter-deck, and cried out that he was an impressed American, and that he had seven mates aboard, all pressed into the British service. They had all been forced to serve against their country, and in the battle three had been killed. Just before the battle began, they had begged to be sent below, but were peremptorily ordered to stand by their guns, or expect to be treated as mutineers. Now that the battle was over, the five who were left alive begged to be taken into the crew of the "United States," which was accordingly done.

After the "Macedonian" had been formally taken possession of by

Lieut. Allen, the British officers were removed to the American ship. Some of them were inclined to be very surly over their defeat, and by words and actions showed their contempt for the Americans, whose prisoners they were. In the first boat which went from the prize to the victor was the first lieutenant of the "Macedonian." As he clambered down the side of his vessel, he noticed that his baggage had not been put in the boat which was to bear him to the American frigate. Turning to Lieut. Allen, he said surlily, —

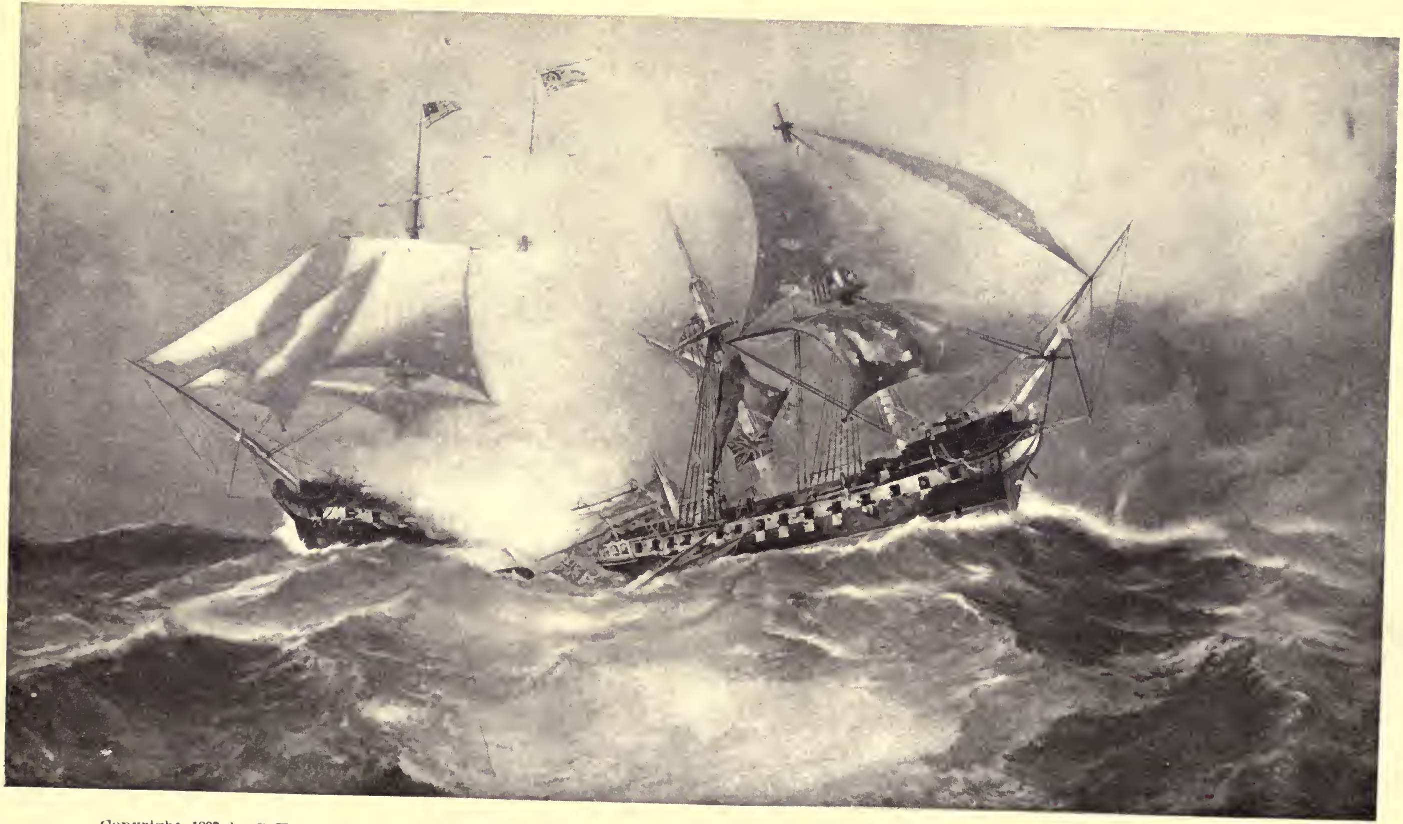
"You do not intend to send me away without my baggage?"

"I hope," responded Allen courteously, "that you do not take us for privateersmen."

"I am sure I don't know by whom I have been taken," was the rude reply, which so angered Allen that he peremptorily ordered the fellow to take his place in the boat, and be silent.

Whatever may have been the demeanor of the British captives, they met with nothing but the most considerate treatment from the American officers. Capt. Carden, on his arrival upon the deck of the victorious frigate, was received with the consideration due his rank and the brave defence of his vessel. He was conducted at once to Decatur's cabin, on entering which he took off his sword, and mutely held it out for Decatur's acceptance. Decatur courteously refused to accept it, saying, "Sir, I cannot take the sword of a man who has defended his ship so bravely; but I will take your hand." As long as Carden and his officers remained on the ship, they were treated with the greatest consideration, and were allowed to retain all their personal property. Every attempt was made to take away from them the bitter remembrance of their defeat. The innate nobility of Decatur's nature is well shown in a letter written to his wife a few days after the action. "One-half of the satisfaction," he says, "arising from this victory is destroyed in seeing the mortification of poor Carden, who deserved success as much as we did who had the good fortune to obtain it." When Carden left the ship, he thanked Decatur for his consideration, and expressed a desire to do likewise by the Americans, should he ever be able to turn the tables.

Amid the heat of battle and the excitement of success, Decatur did not forget little Jack Creamer, the lately enrolled ship's boy. Shortly after the close of the conflict, he sent for Jack to come to his cabin. Soon a much abashed small boy stood before the captain.



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ENGAGEMENT OF THE FRIGATES "UNITED STATES" AND "MACEDONIAN,"
CHRISTMAS DAY, 1812

"Well, Jack," said the great man, "we did take her, after all."

"Yes, your Honor," responded Jack. "I knew we would, before we gave her the first broadside."

"And your share of the prize-money," continued Decatur, "may amount to two hundred dollars, if we get her safe into port. Now, what are you going to do with so much money?"

Jack's eyes had lighted up at the thought of such great wealth.

"Please, sir," he cried, "I'll send half of it to my mother; and the rest will get me a bit of schooling."

"Well said, Jack," said Decatur warmly; and the interview closed for the time. But the captain's interest in the boy was aroused, and for years he showed an almost fatherly regard for the lad. Jack had his "bit of schooling," then received a midshipman's warrant, and for years served with Decatur, giving promise of becoming an able officer. At last, however, his career was ended by the accidental upsetting of a boat when on a pleasure excursion in the Mediterranean.

After putting in for a short time at New London, the two ships, captor and captive, proceeded down the Sound to New York. Here they arrived on the 1st of January, 1813; and the news-writers of the day straightway hailed the "Macedonian" as "a New Year's gift, with the compliments of old Neptune." However, the news of the victory had spread throughout the land before the ships came up to New York; for Decatur had sent out a courier from New London to bear the tidings to Washington. A curious coincidence made the delivery of the despatch as impressive as a studied dramatic scene.

It so happened that the people of Washington had chosen the night of Dec. 28 for a grand ball, to be tendered to the officers of the navy, and particularly to Capt. Stewart of the "Constellation." A brilliant company was gathered, in honor of the occasion. The Secretary of the Navy, and other cabinet officers, lent their presence to the festivities. Capt. Hull of the victorious "Constitution" was present; and, to make the affair even more of a triumph, the captured colors of the "Alert" and the "Guerriere" were draped on the wall of the hall. Near midnight, the revelry was at its height. The brilliant toilets of the ladies; the men, gorgeous in the uniforms of the army, navy, or diplomatic corps; the light of a thousand wax-candles flashing from a myriad of sconces, —

made the scene one of the utmost splendor. All at once, in the midst of the stately measures of the old-fashioned minuet, a murmur rose near the entrance to the hall, and spread until every one was whispering, that news had come of a great naval battle, a victory. Word was brought to the Secretary of the Navy. He directed that the bearer of the despatches should be at once admitted; and, amid cheers and clapping of hands, Lieut. Hamilton entered the hall, and delivered his despatches to his father, the Secretary of the Navy. The tenor of the despatch was soon known to all; and Lieut. Hamilton turned from the greetings of his mother and sisters, who were present, to receive the congratulations of his brother-officers. He had brought the colors of the captured ship with him to the city; and Capts. Stewart and Hull immediately went in search of them, and soon returned, bearing the flag between them. The two veteran sailors marched the length of the hall, amid the plaudits of the gay company, and laid the colors before Mrs. Madison, — the Dolly Madison who is still remembered as the most popular of the "ladies of the White House." Then the company proceeded to the banquet-hall, where, to the list of toasts already prepared, was added, "The health of Commodore Decatur and the officers and crew of the 'United States.'"

Two weeks later, Capt. Decatur and his officers and the crew of the "United States" were sumptuously entertained by the citizens of New York. The officers were tendered a banquet in the great assembly-room of the City Hotel, which was decked with laurel and ship's spars and sails. The chief table at the head of the room, at which sat Mayor De Witt Clinton and Capts. Hull and Decatur, was a marvel of decoration. Its centre was taken up by a sheet of water with grassy banks, bearing on its placid surface a miniature frigate floating at her moorings. Each of the smaller tables bore a small frigate on a pedestal in the centre of the board. On the wall at the end of the room hung a heavy sail, on which was printed the motto, —

"OUR CHILDREN ARE THE PROPERTY OF THEIR COUNTRY."

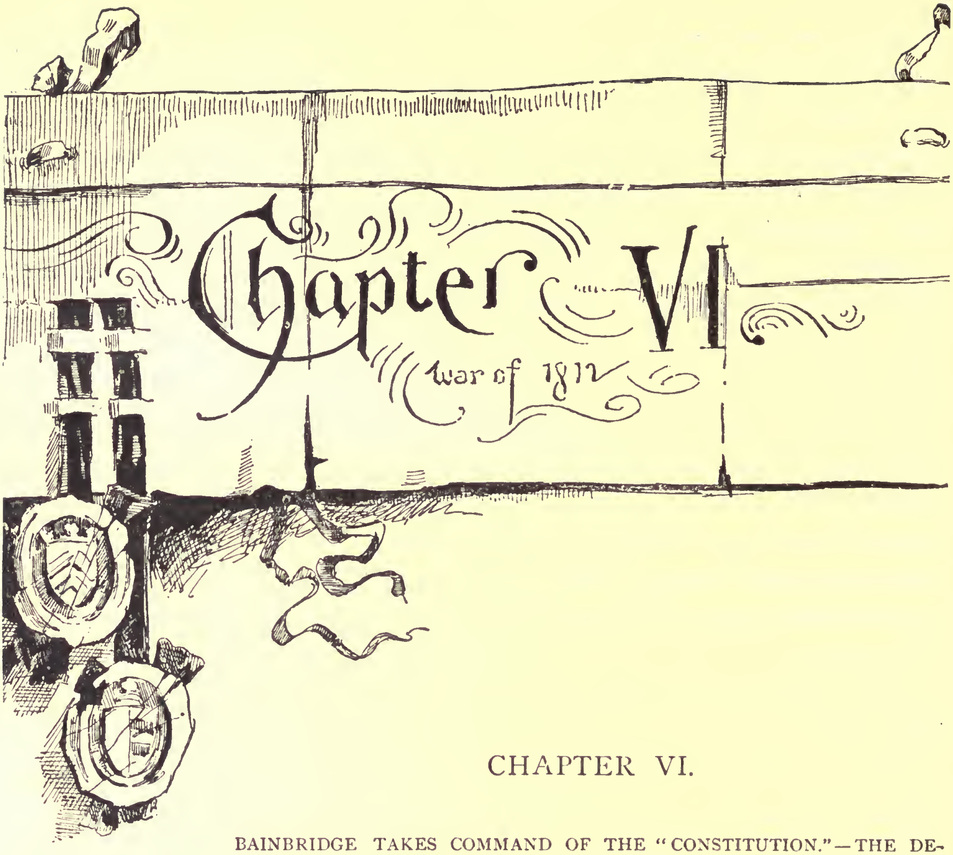
After the dinner was ended and the toasts were begun, the health of the navy was proposed. At the word, the great sail began to ascend, and, being drawn to the ceiling, disclosed an illuminated transparent ainting, showing vividly the scenes of the three great actions won by e "Constitution," the "United States," and the "Wasp." The whole company rose and cheered, until the walls of the hall fairly rung.

Three days later, the jackies from the forecastle of the "United States" were entertained. They were landed at the Battery, and marched in procession to the hotel, headed by a brass band which had been captured with the "Macedonian." Four hundred of the fine fellows were in the line, clad in the dress uniform of the navy of that time. Glazed canvas hats with stiff rims, decked with streamers of ribbon; blue jackets buttoned loosely over red waistcoats; and blue trousers with bell-buttons, — made up the toggery of the tar of 1812. As they marched, two by two, through the narrow streets that led to the City Hotel, the populace assembled on the sidewalks and in the windows along the route, greeting the jackies with cheers. The rear was brought up by the usual band of street-urchins, each of whom that day was firm in his determination to be a sailor.

After the banquet at the hotel, the sailors were marched to the theatre, where the pit had been set aside for them. The orchestra opened with "Yankee Doodle;" but the first bar had hardly been played, when the cheers of the blue-jackets fairly drowned the music, and the musicians were fain to stop. The programme had been arranged with special regard to the seafaring audience. Little children bounded upon the stage, bearing huge letters in their hands, and, after lightly whirling through the mazes of the dance, grouped themselves so that the letters formed the words, —

HULL, JONES, DECATUR.

Then came more cheers from the pit; and more than one glazed hat soared over the heads of the audience, and fell on the stage, — a purely nautical substitute for a bouquet. Late at night, the sailors returned to their ship, elated with an ovation the like of which has never since been tendered to the humble heroes of the forecastle or the ranks.



CHAPTER VI.

BAINBRIDGE TAKES COMMAND OF THE "CONSTITUTION." — THE DEFEAT OF THE "JAVA." — CLOSE OF THE YEAR'S HOSTILITIES ON THE OCEAN.

AS Hull and Decatur sat in the gayly decorated banquet-hall at New York, and, amid the plaudits of the brilliant assembly, drank bumpers to the success of the navy, they litttle thought that thousands of miles away the guns of an American frigate were thundering, and the stout-hearted blue-jackets laying down their lives for the honor and glory of the United States. But so it was. The opening year of the war was not destined to close without yet a fourth naval victory for the Americans; and, at the very moment when they were so joyfully celebrating the glories already won, Capt. Bainbridge in the good ship "Constitution" was valiantly giving battle to a British frigate far south of the equator.

Before considering the details of this last action of the year 1812, let us recount briefly the movements of some American vessels in commission at this time. After sending the "Guerriere" to the bottom of the sea, and bringing her officers and crew in triumph into Boston, Capt. Hull had voluntarily relinquished the command of the "Constitution," in order that some other officer might win laurels with the noble frigate. In his place was appointed Capt. Bainbridge, who had served in the wars with France and Tripoli. After a short time spent in refitting, Bainbridge sailed from Boston, accompanied by the "Hornet," eighteen guns. The "Essex," thirty-two, Capt. Porter, was lying in the Delaware at the time Bainbridge left Boston, and her captain was ordered to cruise in the track of British West-Indiamen. After spending some time in this service, he was to turn southward and visit several South American ports, with a view to joining Bainbridge. Should he fail to find the "Constitution," he was free to act at his own discretion. This permission gave Porter an opportunity to make a cruise seldom equalled in naval annals, and which will form the subject of a subsequent chapter.

The "Constitution" and "Hornet" left Boston on the 26th of October, and shaped their course at once for the south. They put in at two or three ports which had been named to Capt. Porter as meeting-places, but, finding no trace of the "Essex," continued their cruise. At Port Praya in the island of St. Jago, and at Fernando Noronha, the two ships assumed the character of British men-of-war. Officers from whose uniform every trace of the American eagle had been carefully removed went ashore, and, after paying formal visits to the governors of the two islands, requested permission to leave letters for Sir James Yeo of His Majesty's service. Though directed to this prominent British naval officer, the letters were intended for Capt. Porter, and contained directions for his cruise, written in sympathetic ink. After the letters were deposited, the two vessels left; and we may be sure that the British colors came down from the masthead as soon as the ships were out of sight.

The next point at which the American ships stopped was San Salvador, on the coast of Brazil. Here Bainbridge lay-to outside the harbor, and sent in Capt. Lawrence with the "Hornet" to communicate with the American consul. Lawrence returned greatly excited. In the harbor he had found the British sloop-of-war "Bonne Citoyenne," of twenty guns, which was on the point of sailing for England. A more evenly matched adversary for the "Hornet" could not have been found, and the Yankee sailors longed for an engagement. A formal challenge was sent, through the American consul, to the captain of the British ship, requesting him to come out and try conclusions with the "Hornet." Every assurance was offered that the "Constitution" would remain in the offing, and take no part in the battle, which was to test the strength of the two equally matched ships only. Some days later, this challenge was reduced to writing, and sent to the English captain. But that officer declined the challenge, giving as his reason the fact that he had in his ship over half a million pounds in specie, which it was his duty to convey to England. For him to give battle to the "Hornet," would therefore be unwise, as he would put in jeopardy this money which it was his duty to guard. This response was conclusive, and the Englishman must be admitted to have acted wisely; but the knowledge of the valuable cargo of the "Bonne Citoyenne" only increased the desire of the Americans to capture her. The "Hornet" accordingly remained outside the harbor, as a blockader, while the "Constitution" continued her cruise alone.

ASSUMING TO BE BRITISH MEN-OF-WAR.

She had not far to go in order to meet an enemy well worthy of her metal. Three days after parting with the "Hornet," two sail were made, well in shore. One of the vessels so sighted seemed to make for the land, as though anxious to avoid meeting the American ship; while the other came about, and made her course boldly toward the "Constitution."

It was about nine o'clock on a bright December morning that the "Constitution" encountered the strange vessel, which bore down upon her. A light breeze, of sufficient force to enable the vessels to manœuvre, was blowing; but the surface of the ocean was as placid as a lake in summer. The build of the stranger left no doubt of her warlike character, and the bold manner in which she sought a meeting with the American ship convinced Bainbridge that he had fallen in with an enemy. The "Constitution" did not for a time meet the enemy's advances in kind. Back of the advancing frigate could be seen the low, dark coast-line of Brazil, into whose neutral waters the Englishman could retreat, and thus gain protection, if the conflict seemed to go against him. Bainbridge determined that the coming battle should be fought beyond the possibility of escape for the vanquished, and therefore drew away gradually as the stranger came on. By noon the two ships were near enough together for flags to be visible, when Bainbridge set his colors, and displayed private signals. The enemy did the same; and, though his signals were unintelligible, the flag that fluttered at the masthead was clearly the flag of Great Britain. Bainbridge continued his retreat for an hour longer, then, being far enough from land, took in his main-sail and royals, and tacked toward the Englishman.

By this time the strange sail which had been sighted in company with the English ship had disappeared. The low-lying coast of Brazil had sunk below the horizon. From the deck of the "Constitution," nothing could be seen but the vast circle of placid ocean, and the English frigate about a mile to the windward, bearing down to open the fight. The drums beat, and the crew went quietly and in perfect order to their quarters. They were no longer the raw, untrained crew that had joined the ship some months before. They were veterans, with the glorious victory over the "Guerriere" fresh in their remembrance, and now animated with a desire to add to their trophies the strange vessel then in sight.

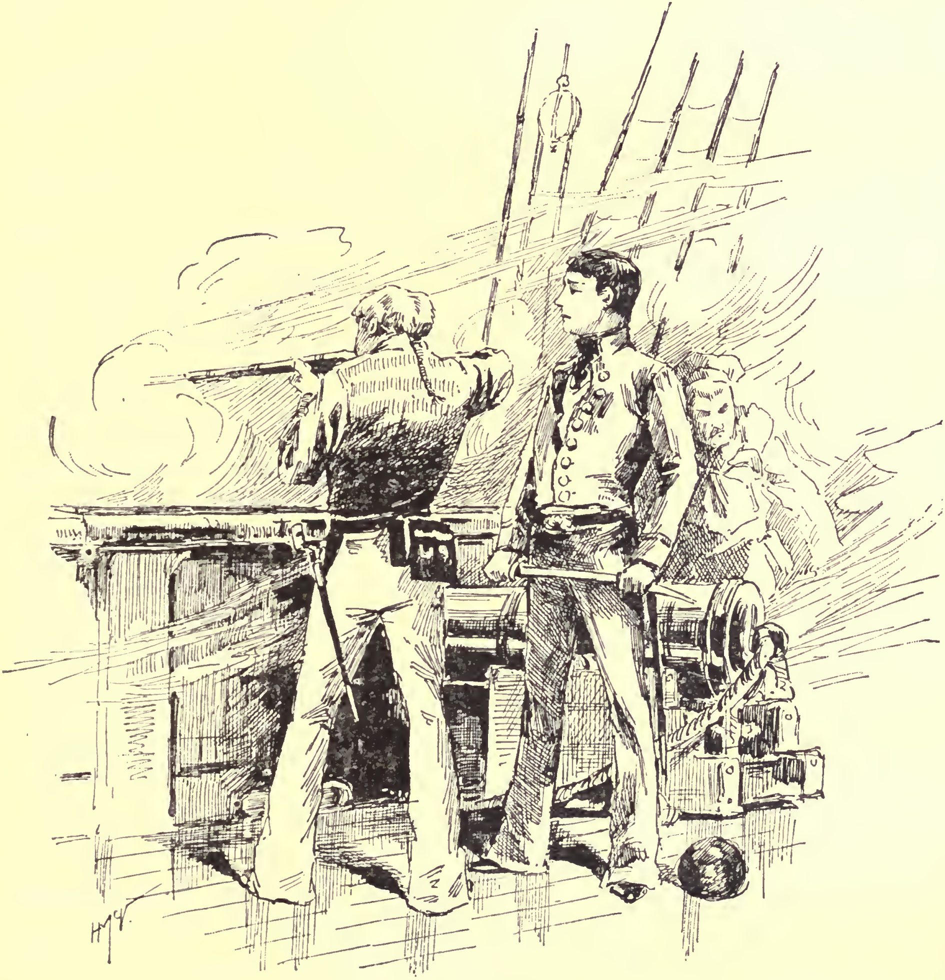
As the enemy, which proved to be the "Java," thirty-eight, Capt. Lambert, came nearer, she hauled down her colors, leaving only a jack flying. A jack is a small flag hoisted at the bowsprit cap. The Union jack of the

United States navy is a blue flag dotted with stars, but without the stripes of the national flag; the jack of Great Britain has the scarlet cross of St. George on a blue field. The Englishman's action in hauling down his ensigns puzzled Bainbridge, who sent a shot as an order that they be raised again. The response to this reminder came in the form of a heavy broadside, and the action opened.

In the light wind that was blowing, the enemy proved the better sailer, and soon forged ahead. His object was to cross the bows of the American ship, and get in a raking broadside, — the end and aim of most of the naval manœuvring in those days of wooden ships and heavy batteries. By skilful seamanship, Bainbridge warded off the danger; and the fight continued broadside to broadside. The firing on both sides was rapid and well directed. After half an hour of fighting, the "Constitution" was seriously crippled by a round shot, which carried away her wheel, and wounded Bainbridge by driving a small copper bolt deep into his thigh. For a moment it seemed as though the American ship was lost. Having no control over the rudder, her head fell off, her sails flapped idly against the spars, and the enemy was fast coming into an advantageous position. But, though wounded, the indomitable Yankee captain was equal to the occasion. Tackle was rigged upon the rudder-post between decks, and a crew of jackies detailed to work the improvised helm. The helmsmen were far out of earshot of the quarter-deck: so a line of midshipmen was formed from the quarter-deck to the spot where the sailors tugged at the steering-lines.

"Hard-a-port!" Bainbridge would shout from his station on the quarter-deck.

"Hard-a-port! Hard-a-port!" came the quick responses, as the midshipmen passed the word along. And so the ship was steered; and, notwithstanding the loss of her wheel, fairly out-manœuvred her antagonist. The first raking broadside was delivered by the "Constitution," and did terrible execution along the gun-deck of the English ship. The two ships then ran before the wind, exchanging broadsides at a distance of half pistol-shot. At this game the American was clearly winning: so the Englishman determined to close and board, in the dashing, fearless way that had made the tars of Great Britain the terror of all maritime peoples. The frigate bore down on the "Constitution," and struck her on the quarter; the long jib-boom tearing its way through the rigging of the American ship. But, while this movement was being executed, the American gunners had not been idle; and the results of their labors were very evident, in the rigging of the "Java." Her jib-boom and bowsprit were so shattered by shot, that they were on the point of giving way; and, as the ships met, the mizzen-mast fell, crashing through forecastle and main-deck, crushing officers and sailors beneath it in the fall, and hurling the topmen into the ocean to drown. The "Constitution"

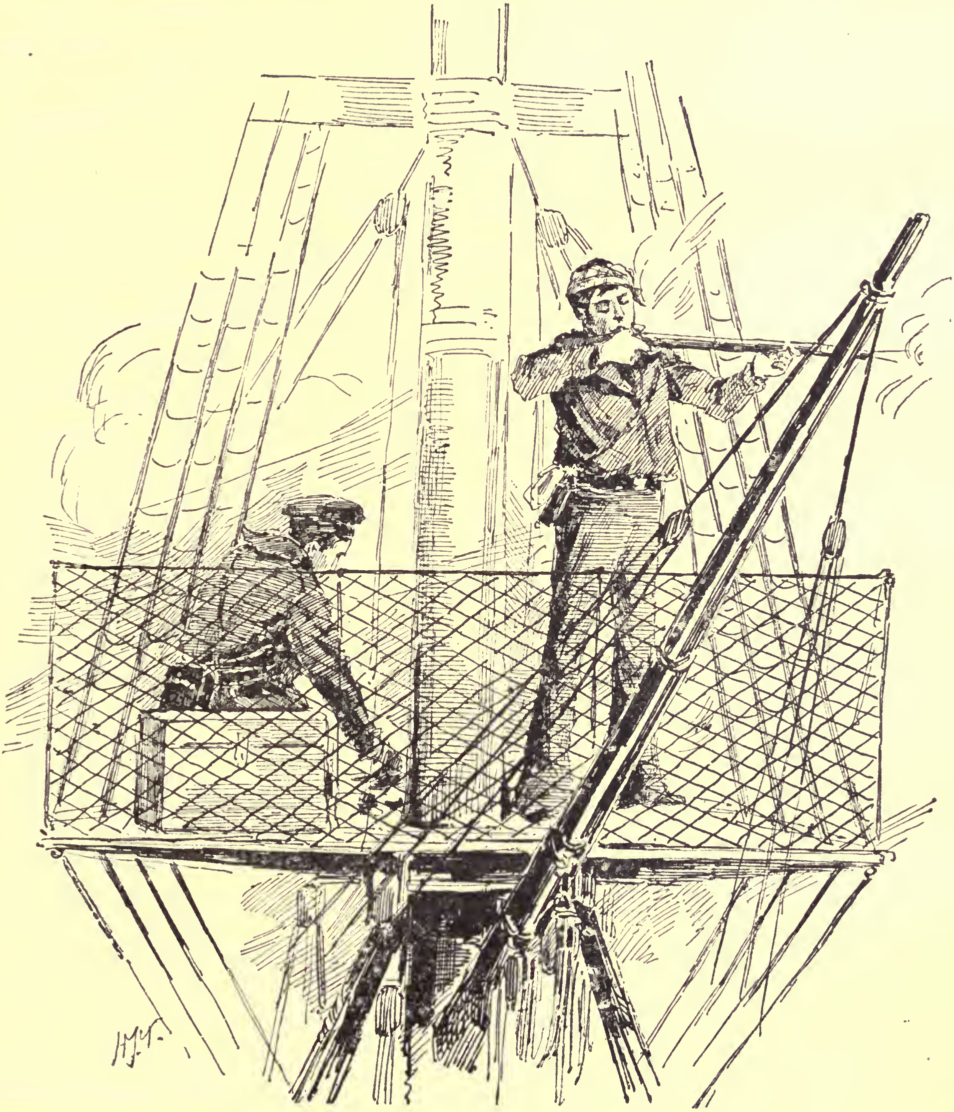


MARINES PICKING OFF THE ENEMY.

shot ahead, but soon wore and lay yard-arm to yard-arm with her foe. For some minutes the battle raged with desperation. A dense sulphurous smoke hung about the hulls of the two ships, making any extended vision impossible. Once in a while a fresher puff of wind, or a change in the position of the ships, would give the jackies a glimpse of their enemy, and show fierce faces glaring from the open ports, as the great guns were drawn in for loading. Then the gray pall of smoke fell, and nothing was to be seen but the carnage near at hand. The officers on the quarter-deck could better judge of the progress of the fray; and, the marines stationed there took advantage of every clear moment to pick off some enemy with a shot from one of their muskets. High up in the tops of the "Constitution" were two small howitzers, with which crews of topmen, under the command of midshipmen, made lively play with grape and canister upon the crowded decks of the enemy. From the cavernous submarine depths of the cock-pit and magazine, to the tops of each ship, not an idler was to be found. Chaplains, surgeons, clerks, cooks, and waiters — all were working or fighting for the honor of the flag under which they served.

Again the British determined to board; and the quick, sharp notes of the bugle calling up the boarders gave warning of their intentions. The men in the tops of the American frigate, looking down from their lofty station, could see the crowd of boarders and marines gathered on the forecastle and in the gang-ways, and could hear the shrill notes of the boatswain's whistle cheering them on. At that moment, however, the American fire raked the enemy with fearful effect, and the volleys of musketry from the marines and topmen made such havoc among the crowded boarders that the attempt was abandoned. The deadly fire of the Americans was not slackened. Capt. Lambert was struck down, mortally wounded; and the command fell upon Lieut. Chads, who, though himself badly wounded, continued the fight with true British courage. Over the side of the "Java" hung the wreck of her top-hamper, which every broadside set on fire. Yet the British tars fought on, cheering lustily, and not once thinking of surrender, though they saw their fore-mast gone, their mizzen-mast shivered, even the last flag shot away, and the last gun silenced.

When affairs had reached this stage, the "Constitution," seeing no flag flying on the enemy, hauled away, and set about repairing her own damages. While thus engaged, the main-mast of the "Java" was seen to go by the board, and the ship lay a hopeless wreck upon the water



IN THE CROSS-TREES.

After making some slight repairs, Bainbridge returned to take possession of his prize, but, to his surprise, found a jack still floating over the helpless hulk. It was merely a bit of bravado, however; for, as the "Constitution" ranged up alongside, the jack was hauled down.

The "Java" proved to be a rich prize. She was one of the best of the English frigates, and had just been especially fitted up for the accommodation of the governor-general of Bombay and his staff, all of whom were then on board. This added to the regular number of officers and crew more than one hundred prisoners, mostly of high rank in British military and social circles.

The boarding officer found the ship so badly cut up that to save her was impossible. Her loss in men, including her captain Henry Lambert, and five midshipmen, was forty-eight, together with one hundred and five wounded, among whom were many officers. The "Constitution" had suffered much less severely, having but twelve killed and twenty wounded. The ship herself was but little damaged; her chief injury being the loss of her wheel, which was immediately replaced by that of the "Java."

Capt. Bainbridge now found himself a great distance from home, with a disabled ship filled with prisoners, many of whom were wounded. Even had the wreck of the "Java" been less complete, it would have been hazardous to attempt to take her back to the United States through the West India waters that swarmed with British vessels. No course was open save to take the prisoners aboard the "Constitution," and set the torch to the disabled hulk.

To do this was a work of no little difficulty. The storm of lead and iron that had swept across the decks of the British frigate had left intact not one of the boats that hung from the davits. The "Constitution" had fared better; but, even with her, the case was desperate, for the British cannonade had left her but two serviceable boats. To transfer from the sinking ship to the victorious frigate nearly five hundred men, over a hundred of whom were wounded, was a serious task when the means of transfer were thus limited.

Three days the "Constitution" lay by her defeated enemy, and hour after hour the boats plied between the two ships. The first to be moved were the wounded. Tackle was rigged over the side of the "Java;" and the mangled sufferers, securely lashed in their hammocks, were gently lowered into the waiting boat, and soon found themselves in the sick-bay of the American ship, where they received the gentlest treatment from those who a few hours before sought only to slay them. The transfer of the wounded once accomplished, the work proceeded with great rapidity: and in the afternoon of the third day the "Constitution" was filled with prisoners; and the "Java," a deserted, shattered hulk, was ready for the last scene in the drama of her career.

The last boat left the desolate wreck, and, reaching the "Constitution," was hauled up to the davits. The side of the American frigate next to the abandoned ship was crowded with men, who looked eagerly across the water. Through the open port-holes of the "Java," a flickering gleam could be seen, playing fitfully upon the decks and gun-carriages. The light grew brighter, and sharp-tongued flames licked the outside of the hull, and set the tangled cordage in a blaze. With this the whole ship seemed to burst into fire, and lay tossing, a huge ball of flame, on the rising sea. When the fire was raging most fiercely, there came a terrific explosion, and the great hull was lifted bodily from the water, falling back shattered into countless bits. Guns, anchors, and iron-work dragged the greater part of the wreckage to the bottom; and when the "Constitution," with all sail set, left the spot, the captive Englishmen, looking sadly back, could see only a patch of charred wood-work and cordage floating upon the ocean to mark the burial-place of the sturdy frigate "Java."

The "Constitution" made sail for San Salvador, where the prisoners were landed; first giving their paroles not to serve against the "United States" until regularly exchanged. Bainbridge then took his ship to Boston, where she arrived in February, 1813.

The substitution of the wheel of the "Java" for that of the "Constitution," shot away in battle, has been alluded to. In his biography of Capt. Bainbridge, Fenimore Cooper relates a story of interest regarding this trophy. It was a year or two after peace was made with England, in 1815, that a British naval officer visited the "Constitution," then lying at the Boston navy-yard. The frigate had been newly fitted out for a cruise to the Mediterranean; and an American officer, with some pride, showed the Englishman over the ship, which was then undoubtedly the finest of American naval vessels. After the tour of the ship had been made, the host said, as they stood chatting on the quarter-deck, —

"Well, what do you think of her?"

"She is one of the finest frigates, if not the very finest, I ever put my foot aboard of," responded the Englishman; "but, as I must find some fault, I'll just say that your wheel is one of the clumsiest things I ever saw, and is unworthy of the vessel."

The American officer laughed.

"Well, you see," said he, "when the 'Constitution' took the 'Java,' the former's wheel was shot out of her. The 'Java's' wheel was fitted on the victorious frigate, to steer by; and, although we think it as ugly as you do, we keep it as a trophy."

All criticisms on the wheel ended then and there.

The defeat of the "Java" closed the warfare on the ocean during 1812. The year ended with the honors largely in the possession of the United States navy. The British could boast of the capture of but two armed vessels, — the "Nautilus," whose capture by an overwhelming force we have already noted; and the little brig "Vixen," twelve guns, which Sir James Yeo, with the "Southampton," thirty-two, had overhauled and captured in the latter part of November. The capture of the "Wasp" by the "Poictiers," when the American sloop-of-war was cut up by her action with the "Frolic," was an occurrence, which, however unfortunate for the Americans, reflected no particular honor upon the British arms.

In opposition to this record, the Americans could boast of victory in four hard-fought battles. In no case had they won through any lack of valor on the part of their antagonists; for the Englishmen had not sought to avoid the battle, and had fought with the dogged valor characteristic of their nation. In one or two instances, it is true that the Americans were more powerful than the foe whom they engaged; but, in such cases, the injury inflicted was out of all proportion to the disparity in size of the combatants. The four great actions resulting in the defeat of the "Guerriere," the "Frolic," the "Macedonian," and the "Java," showed conclusively that the American blue-jackets were equal in courage to their British opponents, and far their superiors in coolness, skill, discipline, and self-reliance; and these qualities may be said to have won the laurels for the American navy that were conceded to it by all impartial observers.

Besides the victories over the four British ships enumerated, the Americans had captured the "Alert," and a British transport bearing a considerable detachment of troops. These achievements, as involving no bloodshed, may be set off against the captures of the "Nautilus" and

"Vixen" by the British. Of the number of British merchant-vessels captured, the records are so incomplete that no accurate estimate can be made. To the naval vessels are accredited forty-six captures among the enemy's merchant-marine, and this estimate is probably very nearly accurate. But with the declaration of war, Portsmouth, Salem, New London, New York, Baltimore, and, indeed, every American seaport, fitted out fleet privateers to prey upon the enemy's commerce. The sails of this private armed navy fairly whitened the sea, and few nights were not illuminated by the flames of some burning prize. As their chief object was plunder, the aim of the privateers was to get their prize safely into port; but, when this was impossible, they were not slow in applying the torch to the captured vessel. The injury they inflicted upon the enemy was enormous, and the record of their exploits might well engage the industry of painstaking historians. As an adjunct to the regular navy, they were of great service in bringing the war to a happv conclusion.

It is not to be supposed that the British men-of-war and privateers were idle while the Americans were thus sweeping the seas. More than one American vessel set sail boldly from some little New England port, freighted with the ventures of all classes of tradesmen, only to be snapped up by a rapacious cruiser. But the mercantile marine of the United States was but small, and offered no such rewards to enterprising privateers as did the goodly fleets of West-Indiamen that bore the flag of Great Britain. And so, while the American privateers were thriving and reaping rich rewards of gold and glory, those of the British were gradually abandoning privateering in disgust. The American prize-lists grew so large, that the newspapers commenced the practice of publishing weekly a list of the enemy's ships taken during the week past. In Baltimore, Henry Niles, in his paper "The Weekly Register," robbed "The London Naval Chronicle" of its vainglorious motto, —

> "The winds and seas are Britain's broad domain,
> And not a sail but by permission spreads."

This sentiment Niles printed at the head of his weekly list of British vessels captured by United States vessels, — a bit of satire not often equalled in the columns of newspapers of to-day.

CHAPTER VII.

THE WAR ON THE LAKES.—THE ATTACK ON SACKETT'S HARBOR.—OLIVER HAZARD PERRY ORDERED TO LAKE ERIE.—THE BATTLE OF PUT-IN-BAY.

LET us now abandon for a time our consideration of the progress of the great naval war on the ocean, and turn our attention to a humbler theatre, in which the drama of battle was proceeding with no less credit to the American participants, though with less grand and inspiring accessories. On the great fresh-water lakes which skirt the northern frontier of the United States, the two warring powers contended fiercely for the mastery. But there were no desperate duels between well-matched frigates; nor, indeed, did either the British or American squadron of the lake station boast a craft of sufficient armament to be termed a frigate, until the war was nearly at an end. Barges, gunboats, sloops, schooners, and brigs made up the squadrons that fought for the possession of the fresh-water seas; and few either of the jackies of the forecastle or the officers of the quarter-deck were bred to the regular service. With such forces it could only happen that the encounters of the foes should be little more than skirmishes, and that neither in immediate loss of life nor in direct results should these skirmishes be important. Such, in fact, was the general character of the hostilities on the lakes, with two noteworthy exceptions, — Perry's victory at Put-in-Bay, and McDonough's successful resistance of the British on Lake Champlain.

That the war should invade the usually peaceful waters of Ontario, Erie, and Champlain, was inevitable from the physical characteristics of the northern frontier of the United States. Great Britain held Canada; and an invasion of her enemy's territory from that province was a military measure, the advisability of which was evident to the most untaught soldier. No overland expedition could hope to make its way through the dense forests of Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, or the Adirondack region of New York. But the lakes offered a tempting opening for invasion. Particularly did the placid, navigable waters of Lake Champlain, stretching from the Canada line far into the heart of New York, invite the invader; while Lakes Erie and Ontario afforded an opportunity for attacking the Americans on what was then, practically, their western frontier.

The Americans were not slow in perceiving the dangers that threatened their north-western frontier, and began to prepare for its defence most energetically at the first declaration of war. It was a work that taxed to the utmost the resources of the young country. The shores of the lakes as far west as Detroit were open to the attacks of the enemy, and, although part of the territory of the United States, were really more accessible to the invaders than to the American defenders. The population was sparse, and the means of transportation very primitive. Before the days of railroads, canals, or even well-kept turnpikes, troops, seamen, ordnance, and all munitions of war could only be transported from the cities on the seacoast by the most laborious hauling over roads hardly worthy of the name. Nor was the transportation problem solved during the continuance of the war. When in May, 1814, the new United States frigate "Superior" lay at her dock at Sackett's Harbor, her ordnance, stores, and cordage had to be brought from Oswego Falls, some fifty miles away. A clear water-route by the Oswego River and the lake offered itself; but Sir James Yeo, with his squadron, was blockading the mouth of the harbor, and the chance for blockade-runners was small indeed. To carry the heavy ordnance and cables overland, was out of the question. The dilemma was most perplexing, but Yankee ingenuity finally enabled the "Superior" to get her outfit. The equipment was loaded upon a small fleet of barges and scows, which a veteran lake captain took to a point sixteen miles from the blockaded harbor. By sailing by night, and skulking up creeks and inland water-ways, the transports reached this point without attracting the attention of the blockading fleet. They had, however, hardly arrived when news of the enterprise came to the ears of the British, and an expedition was sent to intercept the Americans, which expedition the Yankees successfully resisted. The question then arose as to how the stores were to be taken across the sixteen miles of marsh and forest that lay between the boats and the navy-yard at Sackett's Harbor. The cannon and lighter stores were transported on heavy carts with great difficulty, but there still remained the great cable. How to move this was a serious question. No cart could bear its ponderous weight of ninety-six hundred pounds. Again Yankee ingenuity and pluck came to the rescue. Two hundred men volunteered to carry the great rope on their shoulders, and in this way it actually was transported. Along the shore of the little creek the great cable was stretched out with prodigious labor, and lay there looking like a gigantic serpent. The two hundred men ranged themselves along the line at regular intervals, and at a given signal hoisted the burden to their shoulders. At the word of command, all stepped off briskly together, and the long line wound along the narrow path through the forests. They started out cheerily enough, enlivening the work with songs and jests; but at the end of the first mile all were glad enough to throw down the load, and loiter a while by the roadside. A few minutes' rest, and up and on again. Now arms began to ache, and shoulders to chafe, under the unusual burden; but the march continued until noon of the next day, when the footsore and weary carriers marched proudly into Sackett's Harbor, to find sailors and soldiers assembled to greet them with bands and cannon-firing. In accordance with the custom of the time, these demonstrations of honor were supplemented by the opening of a barrel of whiskey, in honor of the arrival of the cable.

This incident, trivial in itself, is typical of that ingenuity and fertility of resource, which, more than any thing else, contributed to the success of the Americans, not only in the lake operations of the war of 1812, but in every war the nation has since undertaken. But the advantages gained by Yankee enterprise and ingenuity were, perhaps, more evident in the operations on Lake Ontario and Lake Erie than in the operations of the armies, or of the fleets upon the ocean. The great contest lay more in the rapid building of ships than in fighting them. At the outset the enemy were better equipped for the struggle than were the Americans. The Canadian frontier had been longer settled, and could lend more men to the needs of the nation. More than this, the route to the ocean by the St. Lawrence River made it really easier to transport naval stores from far-off Liverpool to the British naval station on the shores of Lake Ontario, than to carry like goods across the wooded hills of New York. Nor were the British altogether without naval resources upon the lakes at the hour when war was declared. On Lake Erie the English flag waved over the "Royal George," twenty-two; "Prince Regent," sixteen; "Earl of Moira," fourteen; "Gloucester," ten; "Seneca," eight; and "Simcoe," eight. Opposed to this squadron was but one United States vessel, — the "Oneida," a man-of-war brig carrying sixteen twenty-four-pound carronades. On Lake Erie the British had a squadron of six vessels, carrying in all forty-six guns.

Hostilities opened early on Lake Ontario. For some time before the formal declaration of war, a desultory warfare had been waged by the Americans and Canadians about Niagara. Canadian schooners had been seized on account of alleged violations of the revenue and embargo regulations of the United States. The resentment of the sufferers was aroused, and they only awaited a suitable opportunity to retaliate. The opportunity soon came, in the form of the declaration of war; and a body of Canadian volunteers attacked eight American schooners, near the Thousand Isles, and burned two of them.

With the opening of the war, the United States authorities had fixed upon Sackett's Harbor as the naval station for Lake Ontario. In the harbor, on the 19th of July, 1812, lay the "Oneida," which had lately come into port after a short cruise in search of British schooners. At early dawn of the day mentioned, the lookout reported five ships in the offing, and a few minutes later hailed the deck, to report them to be

British ships-of-war. The alarm quickly spread over the little town. Puny though the British fleet would have appeared upon the ocean, it was of ample power to take the "Oneida" and destroy the village. Before the villagers fairly understood their peril, a small boat came scudding into the harbor before the wind. It bore a message from the British commander, demanding that the "Oneida" and the "Lord Nelson" (a captured Canadian vessel) be surrendered. Should the squadron be resisted, he warned the inhabitants that their town should be burned to the ground.

Commander Woolsey, who commanded the "Oneida," was a United States officer of the regular service, and a man of courage and fertility of resource. Unable to take his vessel out into the lake, he moored her at the entrance of the harbor in such a way that her broadside of nine guns might be brought to bear on the enemy. All hands then set to work getting the other broadside battery ashore; and, by the aid of the villagers, these guns were mounted on a hastily thrown up redoubt on the shore. At the foot of the main street of the village was planted a queerly assorted battery. The great gun, on which the hopes of the Americans centred, was an iron thirty-two-pounder, which had lain for years deeply embedded in the muddy ooze of the lake-shore, gaining thereby the derisive name of the "Old Sow." This redoubtable piece of ordnance was flanked on either side by a brass six-pounder; a pair of cannon that the Yankee sailors had, with infinite pains and indomitable perseverance, dredged up from the sunken hulk of a British war-vessel that had filled a watery grave some years. Two brass nine-pounders completed this novel armament.

It was about eight o'clock in the morning when the British vessels came up within range. Alarm guns had been firing from the shore all the morning; and by that time the village was filled with militia-men, who flocked to the scene of action. Woolsey, who had taken charge of the shore-batteries, ordered a shot from the thirty-two pounder. The "old sow" spoke out bravely, but the shot missing, only roused the enemy to laughter, which could be heard on shore. The British vessels then began a vigorous cannonade, keeping well out of range of the small guns on shore; although so weak were the American defences, that a vigorous onslaught by the enemy would have quickly reduced the town to submission. As it was, a harmless fire was kept up for about two hours. Not a shot took effect, and nothing save the noise and excitement of the cannonading need have deterred the good people of Sackett's Harbor from observing that Sunday morning in accordance with their usual sabbath customs. It was reserved for one shot to put an end to this strange engagement. Just as the artillerists who served the iron thirty-two pounder were loading the gun, a cannon-ball struck the ground near the battery. One of the Americans ran, and, picking up the spent ball, brought it into the battery, saying, "I've been playing ball with the red-coats, and have caught them out. Let's see now if they can catch back again." So saying, he rammed the missile down the muzzle of the long thirty-two, and sent it back with deadly aim. The captured ball crashed into the stern of the "Royal George," raked her from stem to stern, killing fourteen men, and wounding eighteen in its course. The marksman, watching the course of his shot, saw the splinters fly from the deck of the British ship; and the Americans cheered loudly for the "old sow" as the British squadron put about, and left the Sackett's Harbor people to celebrate their easily won victory.

Insignificant though this engagement was, it was the chief battle of the year on Lake Ontario. The Americans strained every nerve to put more armed vessels afloat, and, being left unmolested by the British, managed to have quite a flotilla in commission before winter set its icy seal upon the lake. In September, Capt. Isaac Chauncey was appointed commander-in-chief of the lake navy; and, on his arrival, he proved himself the very man for the place. He rushed ahead the building of new ships, arranged for the transportation of seamen from the seacoast to man the vessels on the lakes, and then, not content with attending only to the building of the ships, took command of the squadron in commission, and fairly swept the lake clear of the enemy's vessels. He met with little opposition as the British retired to their naval station at Kingston, remaining there until all further naval operations were checked by the ice.

Winter, which seriously impeded the work of the British by putting an end to navigation upon the St. Lawrence, did away with many of the difficulties of transportation which had so hampered the Americans. The roads to the seacoast grew hard, and were soon covered with snow, over which long teams of oxen plodded to and fro until the path was well broken. Then began the hauling of supplies from the seaboard. From his post at Sackett's Harbor, Chauncey sent out requisitions for ship-timber, cordage, ordnance, and ship-carpenters. Long trains of heavily laden wagons and sledges wound their way across the State from New York or Albany to the station at Sackett's Harbor. Agents were appointed in the seacoast towns to enlist seamen for service on the lakes, — a work that required no small powers of persuasion; for the true salt-water jack looks with great disfavor upon the "fish-ponds" of fresh water. But, by dint of munificent offers of bounties and prize-money, several hundred sailors were induced to leave their ships on the ocean, and take service in the infant navy of the lakes.

Most of the sailors were sent across the State in the dead of winter. The trip was made in huge sleds, drawn by several pairs of horses, and carrying a score or more men each. The jackies enlivened the journey with rollicking songs and stories as the sleds sped over the well-packed roads through the sparsely settled country. One of the largest parties was accompanied by a brass band, with the aid of which the sailors made their entrance to the villages along the road in truly royal style. The sleighs and horses were gayly decked with the national colors. The band led in the first sleigh, closely followed by three other sledges, filled with blue-coated men. Before the little tavern of the town the *cortége* usually came to a halt; and the tars, descending, followed up their regulation cheers with demands for grog and provender. After a halt of an hour or two, the party continued its way, followed by the admiration of every villager, and the envy of every boy large enough to have seafaring ambitions.

With all his energy and unswerving fidelity to the cause of his country, Chauncey probably did nothing of more direct benefit to the United States than writing a letter to a young naval officer, then stationed at Newport, asking him to come West and take charge of the naval operations on Lake Erie. The name of this young officer was Oliver Hazard Perry, and a year later no name in American history carried with it more fame.

Hostilities on Lake Erie had been unimportant up to the time that Chauncey sent for Perry. The Americans had no naval vessel to oppose to the fleet of Canadian craft that held the lake. One war-vessel only had shown the American flag on the lake; and she had been fitted out by the army, and had fallen into the hands of the enemy at the surrender of Detroit. But this prize was not destined to remain long in the hands of the Canadians. Early in the autumn of 1812, Chauncey had sent Lieut. Elliott to Lake Erie, with instructions to begin at once the creation of a fleet by building or purchasing vessels. Elliott chose as the site of his improvised navy-yard Black Rock, a point two miles below Buffalo; and there pushed ahead his work in a way that soon convinced the enemy, that, unless the young officer's energy received a check, British supremacy on Lake Erie would soon be at an end. Accordingly, two armed brigs, the "Caledonia" and the "Detroit," recently captured by the British, came down to put an end to the Yankee ship-building. Like most of the enemy's vessels on the lakes, these two brigs were manned by Canadians, and had not even the advantage of a regular naval commander.

On the morning of the 8th of October, the sentries on the river-side at Black Rock discovered the two British vessels lying at anchor under the guns of Fort Erie, a British work on the opposite side of the Niagara River, that there flows placidly along, a stream more than a mile wide. Zealous for distinction, and determined to checkmate the enemy in their design, Elliott resolved to undertake the task of cutting out the two vessels from beneath the guns of the British fort. Fortune favored his enterprise. It happened that on that very day a detachment of sailors from the ocean had arrived at Black Rock. Though wearied by their long overland journey, the jackies were ready for the adventure, but had no weapons. In this dilemma Elliott was forced to turn for aid to the military authorities, from whom he obtained pistols, swords, and sabres enough to fit out his sailors for the fray. With the arms came a number of soldiers and a small party of adventurous citizens, all of whom enlisted under the leadership of the adventurous Elliott. In planning the expedition, the great difficulty lay in getting rid of the too numerous volunteers.

By nightfall, the preparations for the expedition were completed. In the underbrush that hung over the banks of the river, two large boats were concealed, ready for the embarkation. At midnight fifty men, armed to the teeth, silently took their places in each of the great barges, and pushed out upon the black surface of the river. All along the bank were crowds of eager watchers, who discussed the chances of success with bated breath, lest the merest whisper should alarm the British sentries on the farther shore. With steady strokes of the muffled oars, the two boats made their way toward the two brigs that could just be seen outlined against the sky. Elliott, in the first boat, directed the movements of his men, and restrained the too enthusiastic. So stealthy was the approach, that the foremost boat was fairly alongside of the "Detroit" before the British took the alarm. Then the quick hail of the sentry brought an answering pistol-shot from Elliott; and, amid volleys of musketry, the assailants clambered up the sides of the brigs, and with pistol and cutlass drove the startled crew below. So complete was the surprise, that the British made but little resistance; and the cables of the brigs were cut, sails spread, and the vessels under way, before the thunder of a gun from Fort Erie told that the British on shore had taken the alarm.

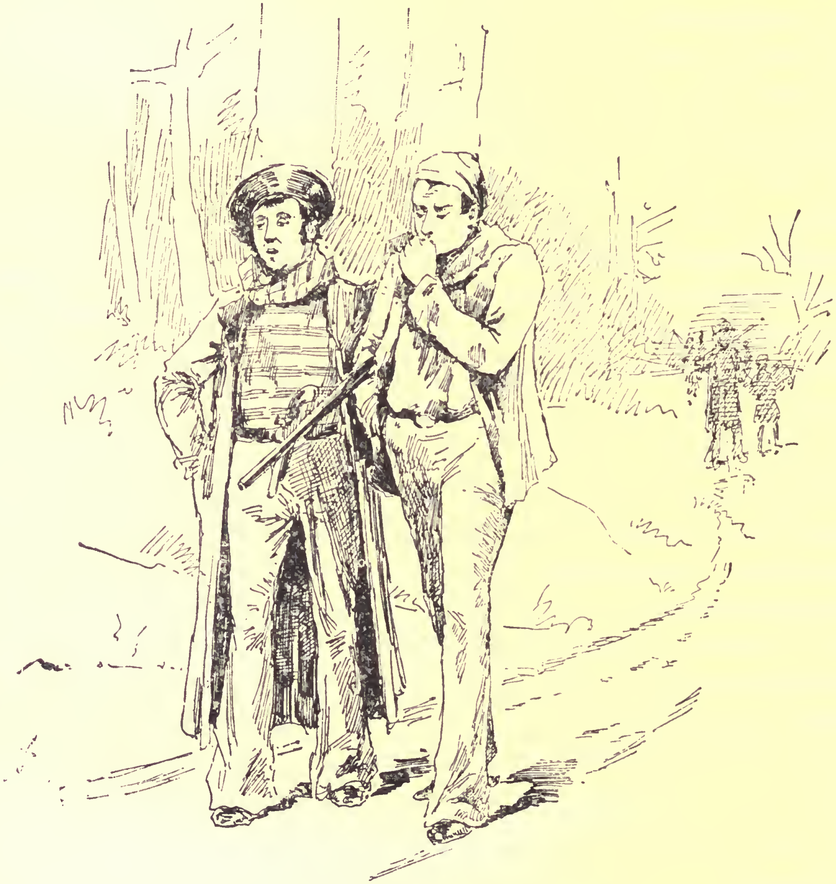
At the report of the first shot fired, the dark line of the American shore suddenly blazed bright with huge beacon fires, while lanterns and torches were waved from commanding points to guide the adventurous sailors in their navigation of the captured brigs. But the victors were not to escape unscathed with their booty. The noise of the conflict, and the shouts of the Americans on the distant bank of the river, roused the British officers in the fort, and the guns were soon trained on the receding vessels. Some field-batteries galloped along the bank, and soon had their guns in a position whence they could pour a deadly fire upon the Americans. Nor did the spectators on the New York side of the river escape unharmed; for the first shot fired by the field-battery missed the brigs, but crossed the river and struck down an American officer. Almost unmanageable in the swift current and light wind, the two brigs seemed for a time in danger of recapture. The "Caledonia" was run ashore under the guns of an American battery; but the "Detroit," after being relieved of the prisoners, and deserted by her captors, was beached at a point within range of the enemy's fire. The British made several determined attempts to recapture her, but were beaten off; and, after a day's fighting around the vessel, she was set on fire and burned to the water's edge. The "Caledonia," however, remained to the Americans, and some months later did good service against her former owners.

It was shortly after this occurrence that Lieut. Perry offered his services for the lakes; and four months later he received a letter from Chauncey, saying, "You are the very person that I want for a particular service, in which you may gain reputation for yourself, and honor for your country." This letter was quickly followed by orders from the Secretary of the Navy to report at once for duty to Chauncey at Sackett's Harbor. Perry was overjoyed. The dull monotony of his duties at Newport suited little his ardent nature. He longed for active service, and an opportunity to win distinction. His opportunity had at last come; and twenty hours after the receipt of his orders, he and his thirteen-year-old brother were seated in a sleigh and fairly started on the long drive across the country. Travelling was a serious matter in those days, and the journey from Newport to Sackett's Harbor required twelve days.

On his arrival, Perry found that the special service for which he was needed was the command of a naval force on Lake Erie. He stopped but a short time at Sackett's Harbor, and then pressed on to Erie, the base of the naval operations on the lake of the same name. It was late in March when Perry arrived; and the signs of spring already showed that soon the lake would be clear of ice, and the struggle for its control recommence. The young lieutenant was indefatigable in the labor of preparation. He urged on the building of vessels already begun. He arranged for the purchase of merchant schooners, and their conversion into gunboats. He went to Pittsburg for supplies, and made a flying trip to Buffalo to join Chauncey in an attack upon Fort George at the mouth of the Niagara River. All the time, he managed to keep up a constant fire of letters to the Secretary of the Navy and to Chauncey, begging for more sailors. By summertime, he had five vessels ready for service, but no men to man them. The enemy blockaded him, and he dared not accept the challenge. In July he wrote to Chauncey: "The enemy's fleet of six sail are now off the bar of this harbor. What a golden opportunity if we had men! . . . Give me men, sir, and I will acquire both for you and myself honor and glory on this lake, or perish in the attempt." Again he wrote: "For God's sake, and yours and mine, send me men and officers; and I will have them all [the British squadron] in a day or two." When the men finally did arrive, he was much disgusted with their appearance, pronouncing them to be "a motley set,

— blacks, soldiers, and boys." Nevertheless, this same motley crew, headed by the critical young officer, won a victory that effectually crushed the pretensions of the enemy to the control of Lake Erie.

His crews having arrived, Perry was anxious to get out upon the lake, and engage the enemy at once. But this course of action was for a long time impossible. The flotilla lay snugly anchored within the harbor of Erie, the entrance to which was closed by a bar. To cross this bar, the ships would have been obliged to send all heavy ordnance ashore; and, as the enemy kept close watch outside the harbor, the American fleet was practically blockaded. For several weeks the Americans were thus kept prisoners, grumbling mightily at their enforced



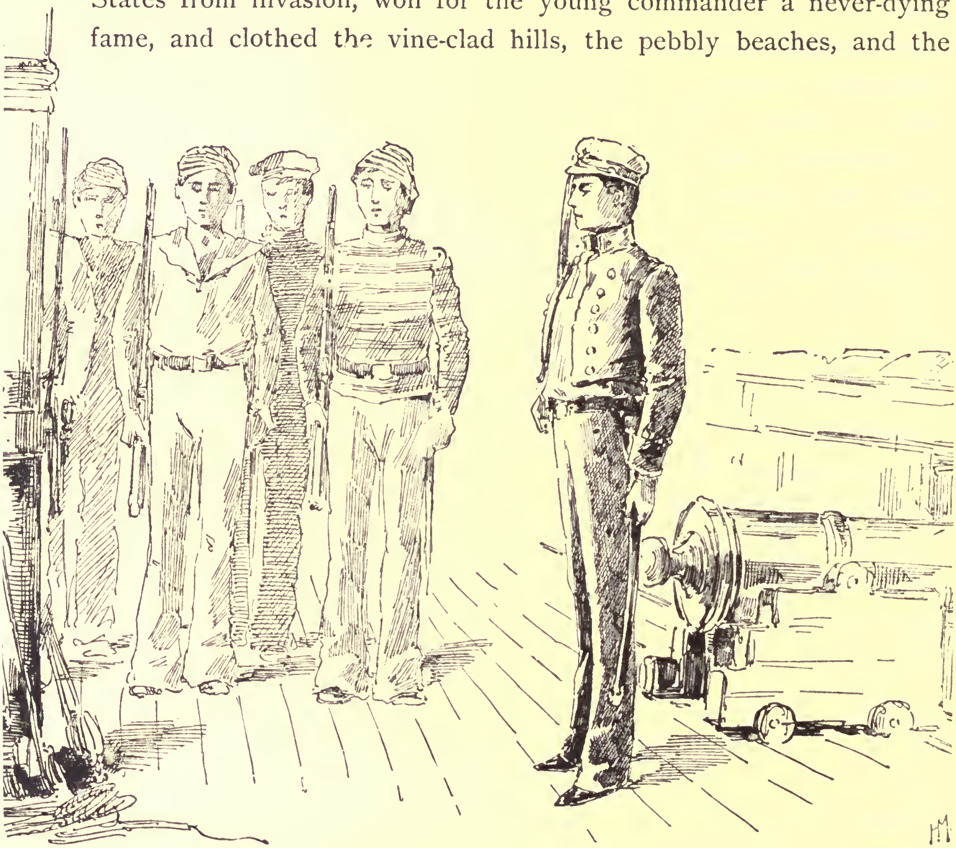
PERRY'S RECRUITS.

inaction, and longing for a chance to get at the enemy. One morning in August word was brought to Perry that the blockading fleet had disappeared. Instantly all was life and bustle in the harbor. The crews of all the vessels were ordered aboard; and the flotilla dropped down to the bar, intending to cross early in the morning. At dawn the movement was begun. The schooners and other small craft were easily taken outside; but, when it came to the turn of the two gun-brigs, "Lawrence" and "Niagara," it became evident that mechanical assistance was required. Accordingly, a powerful "camel" was hastily improvised, by the aid of which the two vessels were dragged across the bar. Hardly had the second brig made the passage in safety, when the British fleet appeared in the offing. Tradition says that the opportune absence of the enemy's fleet was caused by a public banquet to which the citizens of Port Dover had invited Commodore Barclay and his officers. While the dinner was going merrily on, the Americans were hard at work, escaping from the trap in which the British had left them. In responding to a toast at the banquet, Barclay said, "I expect to find the Yankee brigs hard and fast on the bar at Erie when I return, in which predicament it will be but a small job to destroy them." His anticipations were not realized; for, on his arrival, he found the entire squadron safely floating in the deep water outside the bar.

Had Barclay but known it, he would even then have found it "but a small job to destroy them;" for the two brigs, having been stripped of their ordnance, would have been easy prey for the British squadron. But Perry's bold action in sending forward two schooners to engage the enemy seemed to alarm the too prudent commodore; and the British bore away, and were soon out of sight.

By night Perry's flotilla was in readiness for cruising, and set out immediately in pursuit of the foe. Barclay seemed to avoid the conflict; and, after some weeks' cruising, the Americans cast anchor at Put-in-Bay, and awaited there the appearance of the enemy.

The little flotilla that lay anchored on the placid waters of the picturesque bay consisted of nine vessels, ranging in size from the "Trippe," a puny sloop carrying one gun, to the "Lawrence" and "Niagara," brigs carrying each two long twelves and eighteen short thirty-twos. No very formidable armada was that of a handful of pygmy vessels, commanded by a young officer who had never heard the thunderous cannonade of a naval battle, or seen the decks of his ships stained with the blood of friends and daily companions. Yet the work of the little squadron saved the United States from invasion, won for the young commander a never-dying fame, and clothed the vine-clad hills, the pebbly beaches, and the crystal waters of Put-in-Bay with a wealth of proud, historical associations.



DRILLING THE RAW RECRUITS.

Day after day the vessels lay idly at their anchorage, and the sailors grew restless at the long inactivity. Perry alone was patient; for to him had come the knowledge that the hostile fleet was getting short of supplies, and would soon be starved out of its retreat at Malden. Knowing this, he spared no pains to get his men into training for the coming conflict. They were exercised daily at the great guns, and put through severe drills in the use of the cutlass, in boarding, and repelling boarders. By constant drill and severe discipline, Perry had made of the motley crew sent him a well-drilled body of seamen, every man of whom had become fired with the enthusiasm of his commander.

As the time passed, and the day of battle drew nearer, Perry's confidence in his men increased; and he looked upon the coming conflict as one certain to bring glory to his country. At early dawn the jackies on the ships could see the slender form of their commander perched upon the craggy heights of one of the islands, called to this day "Perry's Lookout," eagerly scanning the horizon in the direction of Malden. On the night of Sept. 9, 1813, the commodore felt convinced that on the next day the British would come out to battle. Accordingly, a conference of captains was called in the cabin of the flag-ship, and each received directions as to his course of action during the fight. They were urged to force the fighting to close quarters. Said Perry, "Nelson has expressed my idea in the words, 'If you lay your enemy alongside, you cannot be out of your place.'" As the officers were about to depart, Perry drew from a locker a large, square blue flag, on which appeared, in white letters, the dying words of the gallant Lawrence, "DON'T GIVE UP THE SHIP!" "This," said Perry, "shall be the signal for action; and when it appears at the masthead, remember your instructions." The conference then ended; and the captains returned to their ships across the bay, silvered by the light of the moon, to spend the greater part of the night in preparations for the great danger of the coming day.

Morning dawned bright and clear, with a light breeze blowing, that broke into ripples the surface of the land-locked bay. The rosy light of the rising sun was just reddening the eastern horizon, when, from the lookout in the foretop of the "Lawrence," came the long-drawn hail of "Sail, ho!" quickly repeated from the other vessels.

Perry was already on deck. "What does it look like?" he shouted to the lookout.

"A clump of square rigged, and fore and afters, sir," was the response.

In a few minutes the signals "Enemy in sight," and "Get under way," were flying from the masthead of the flag-ship; and the merry piping of the boatswains' whistles, and the measured tramp of the sailors around the capstans, told that signals were observed, and were being obeyed.

The fleet was soon threading its way through the narrow channels, filled with islands, at the entrance to the bay, and finally came into line on the open lake. Not a cloud was in the sky. The lake was calm, with enough wind blowing to admit of manœuvring, yet gentle enough to be of advantage to the schooners that made up the greater part of each fleet.

For some time the Americans held back, manœuvring to get the weather-gauge; but Perry's impatience for the fray got the better of his caution, and he determined to close at once. His first officer remonstrated, saying, "Then you'll have to engage the enemy to leeward."

"I don't care," responded the commodore. "Leeward or windward, they shall fight to-day." Then, turning to the quartermaster, he called for the battle-flag, which being brought, he mustered the crew aft, and addressed them briefly, telling them of the task before them, and urging them to fight bravely for the victory. "My brave lads," he concluded, "this flag bears the last words of Capt. Lawrence. Shall I hoist it?"

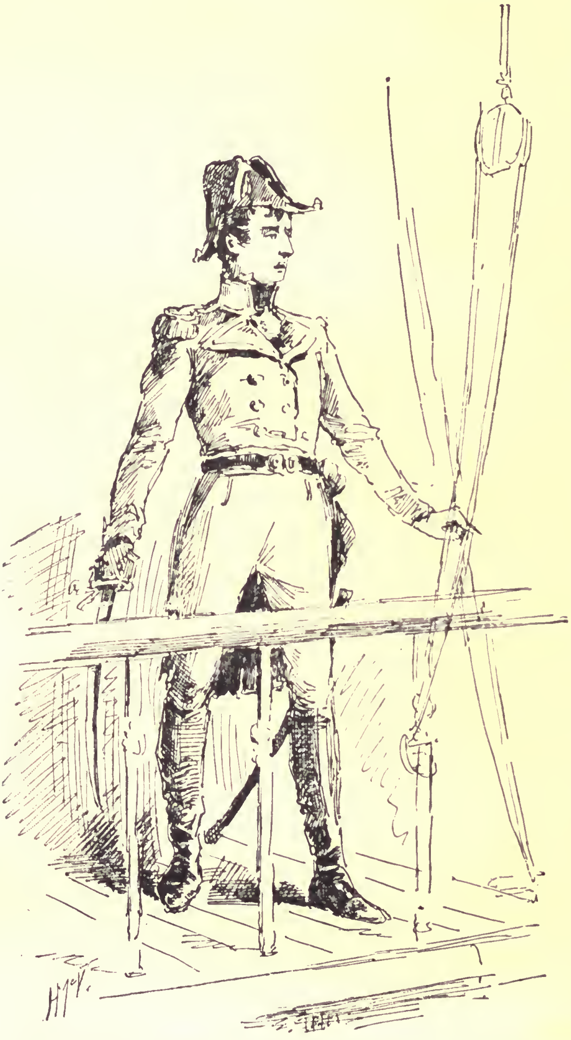
"Ay, ay, sir!" cried the jackies, in unison; and, as the flag was swiftly run to the masthead, the cheers of the sailors on the deck of the "Lawrence" were echoed from the neighboring vessels, as the white letters showed boldly against the blue flag, bearing to each commander the exhortation, "Don't give up the ship!"

The battle-signal being thus displayed, the vessels moved onward to the attack. As the crew of the "Lawrence" stood at their guns, the cooks passed along the decks, handing to each man a bit of food, that his strength might not leave him in the coming struggle. Then followed boys with boxes of sand, which they strewed upon the decks, to afford a firm foothold for the men at the guns. The hammocks were stowed along the nettings, to serve as some little protection against flying shot. The men stood silent and pale at their quarters, each occupied with his own grave thoughts, but all determined to fight like brave men and true for the honor of the flag. By Perry's side stood his brother, a boy thirteen years old, armed and ready to do his duty as well as the older men.

The British came on gallantly. Barclay had lost all his diffidence, and brought up his vessels like a veteran. His ships were kept close together; the ship "Detroit" under short sail, that the pygmy sloop "Little Belt" might not be left in the rear. The Americans came down in single file, headed by the schooner "Scorpion." Suddenly through the still air rang out the sharp notes of a bugle-call on the enemy's flag-ship. It was the signal for action; and, as the last notes died away, the bands struck up "Rule, Britannia." The Americans answered with cheers; and in the midst of the cheering, a jet of smoke and fire spurted from the side of the "Detroit," and a heavy shot splashed into the water near the "Lawrence," while a dull, heavy report came booming over the water.

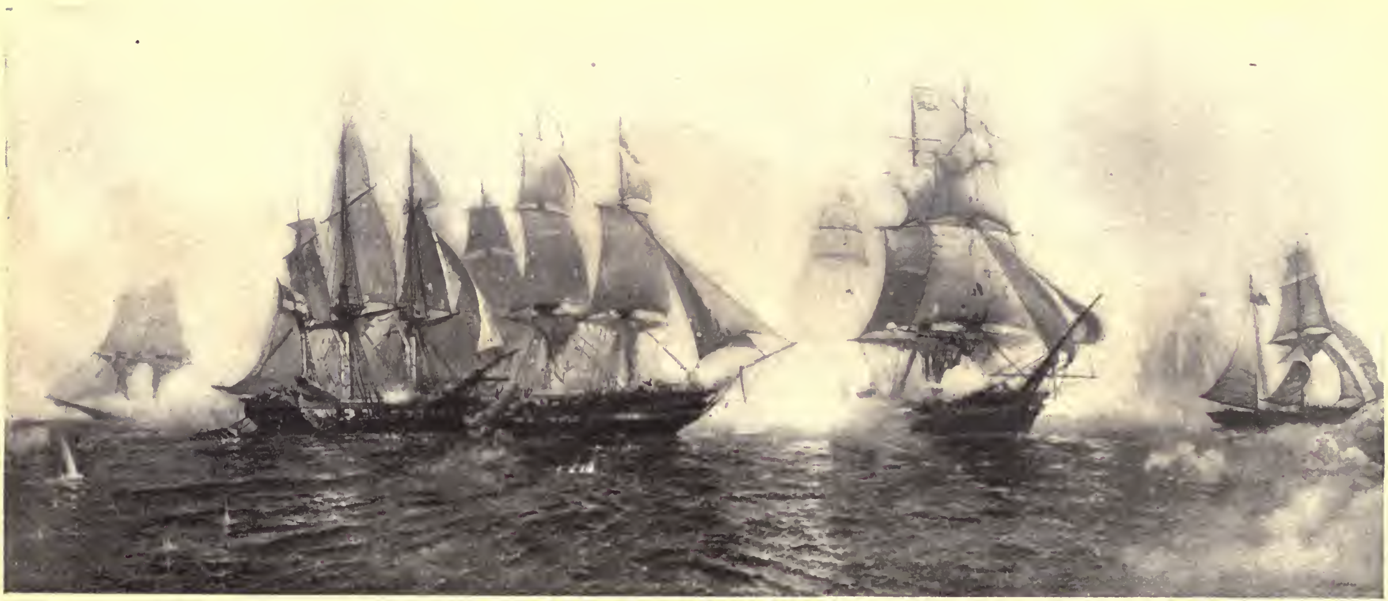
The battle was opened, but five minutes elapsed before a second shot was fired. When it did come, it crashed through the bulwarks of the "Lawrence," and sped across her deck, doing no great damage. "Steady, lads, steady," cried Perry, from his post on the quarter-deck, as he saw an uneasy stir among his men, who longed to return the fire. The commodore was determined to fight at close quarters, and hung out signals for each ship to choose its antagonist, and fight the fight out for itself.

It was then high noon, and the battle soon became general. The little schooners "Scorpion" and "Ariel" pluckily kept their place in the van of the American line, but the fire of the enemy fell most fiercely upon the flag-ship "Lawrence." No less than four vessels at one time were grouped about the "Lawrence," pouring in a destructive fire, and bent upon destoying the flag-ship and her brave commander; then taking the smaller vessels in detail. The "Lawrence" fought bravely, but the odds were too great. The carronades with which she was armed were no match for the long guns of her adversaries. For two hours the unequal combat raged, and no American vessel came to the aid of the sorely smitten flag-ship. Amid the hail of cannon-balls and bullets, Perry seemed to bear a charmed life. He saw his officers and men falling all about him. John Brooks, the lieutenant of marines, fought by the commodore's side. While speaking cheerfully to the commodore, a cannon-ball struck the young lieutenant on the hip, dashing him across the deck against the bulwark, and mutilating him so, that he plead piteously with Perry, imploring that he might be put out of his misery with a pistol-shot. From this awful spectacle Perry turned to speak to the captain of a gun, when the conversation was abruptly cut short by a shot which killed the seaman instantly. Perry returned to the quarter-deck. The first lieutenant came rushing up, his face bloody, and his nose swelled to an enormous size from a splinter which had perforated it. "All the officers in my division are killed," he cried. "For God's sake, give me more!" Perry sent some men to his aid; but they soon fell, and the cry for more men arose again. One of the surgeons who served in the cockpit on that dreadful day states, that, in the midst of the roar of battle, Perry's voice was heard calling down the hatchway, and asking any surgeon's mates who could be spared, to come on deck and help work the guns. Several went up; but the appeal was soon repeated, and more responded. When no more men could be obtained, the voice of the commodore took a pleading tone. "Can any of the wounded pull a rope?" said he; and such was his ascendency over the men, that several poor mangled fellows dragged themselves on deck, and lent their feeble strength to the working of the guns.



COMMODORE PERRY AT THE BATTLE OF LAKE ERIE.

Amid all the carnage, the sailors were quick to notice the lighter incidents of the fray. Even the cock-pit, filled with the wounded, and reeking with blood that dripped through the cracks in the deck above, once resounded with laughter as hearty as ever greeted a middy's after-dinner joke in the steerage. Lieut. Yarnall received a bad scalp-wound, which fairly drenched his face with blood. As he groped his way towards the cock-pit, he passed a lot of hammocks stuffed with "cat-tails" which had been stowed on the bulwarks. The feathery down of the "cat-tails" filled the air, and settled thick upon the head and face



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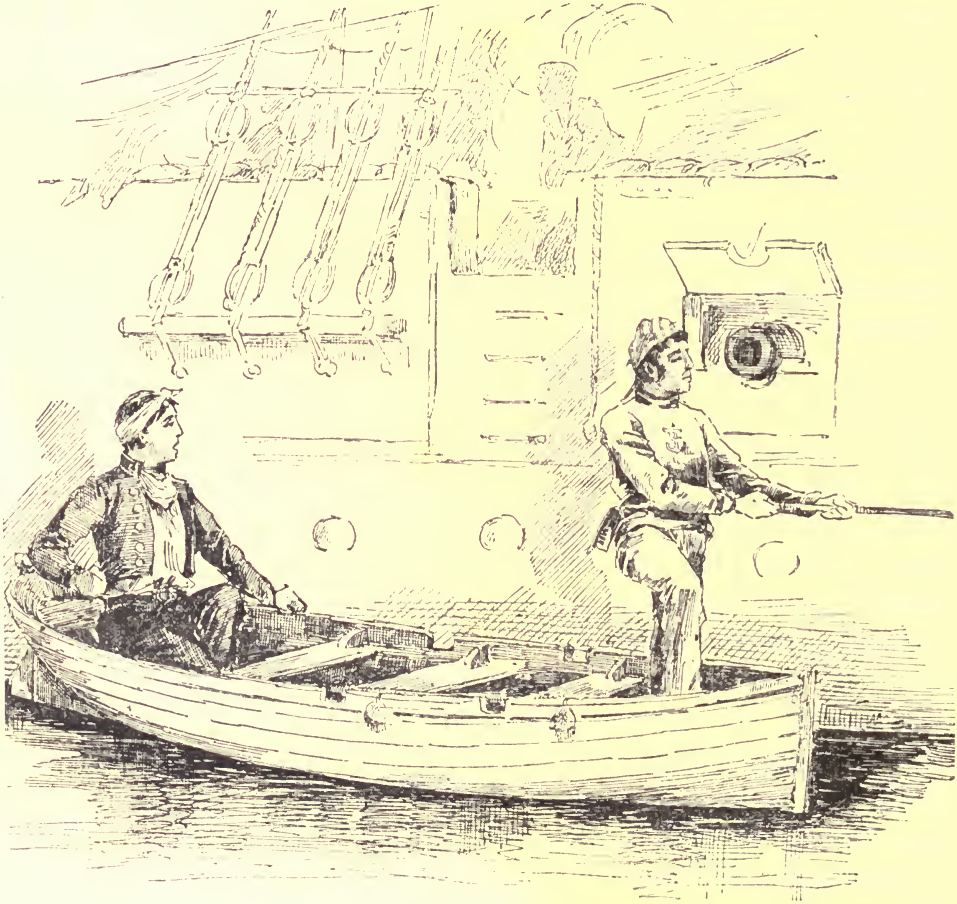
PERRY'S VICTORY—THE BATTLE OF LAKE ERIE, SEPTEMBER 10, 1813

of the officer, robbing his countenance of all semblance to a human face. As he descended the ladder to the cock-pit, his owl-like air roused the wounded to great shouts of laughter. "The Devil has come among us," they cried.

While talking to his little brother, Perry to his horror saw the lad fall at his feet, dashed to the deck by an unseen missile. The commodore's agony may be imagined; but it was soon assuaged, for the boy was only stunned, and was soon fighting again at his post. The second lieutenant was struck by a spent grape-shot, and fell stunned upon the deck. He lay there for a time, unnoticed. Perry raised him up, telling him he was not hurt, as no blood could be seen. The lieutenant put his hand to his clothing, at the point where the blow had fallen, and discovered the shot lodged in his coat. Coolly putting it in his pocket, he remarked, "You are right: I am not hurt. But this is my shot," and forthwith returned to his duty.

It was a strange-looking body of men that fought at the guns of the "Lawrence." Lean, angular Yankee sailors from the seafaring communities of New England stood by the side of swarthy negroes, who, with their half-naked black bodies, in the dense powder-smoke, seemed like fiends in pandemonium. In the rigging were stationed a number of Kentucky riflemen, who had volunteered to serve during the battle. The buckskin shirts and leggings gave an air of incongruity to their presence on a man-of-war. Their unerring rifles, however, did brave service for the cause of the stars and stripes. At the opening of the action, two tall Indians, decked in all the savage finery of war-paint and feathers, strode the deck proudly. But water is not the Indian's element, and the battle had hardly begun when one fled below in terror; the other remained on deck, and was killed early in the action.

Courageous and self-confident though the American commander was, the moment came when he could no longer disguise the fact that his gallant flag-ship was doomed to destruction before the continuous and deadly fire of her adversaries. There was but one course of action open, and upon this he determined at once. He would transfer his flag to the "Niagara," and from the deck of that vessel direct the movements of his fleet. Accordingly, the only uninjured boat of the "Lawrence" was lowered; and Perry sprang into the stern, followed by his little brother. Before the boat pushed off, the battle-flag was thrown into her; and, wrapping it about him, Perry took a standing position in the stern, and ordered the oarsmen to give way. He steered straight for the "Niagara," through the very centre of the fight. The enemy quicky grasped the purpose of the movement, and great guns and muskets were trained on the little boat. Shot of all sizes splashed in the water about the boat, splintered the oars, and buried themselves in the gunwale. The crew begged their commander to sit down, and make himself a less conspicuous target for the fire of the enemy; but Perry paid but little attention


MAKING READY TO LEAVE THE "LAWRENCE."

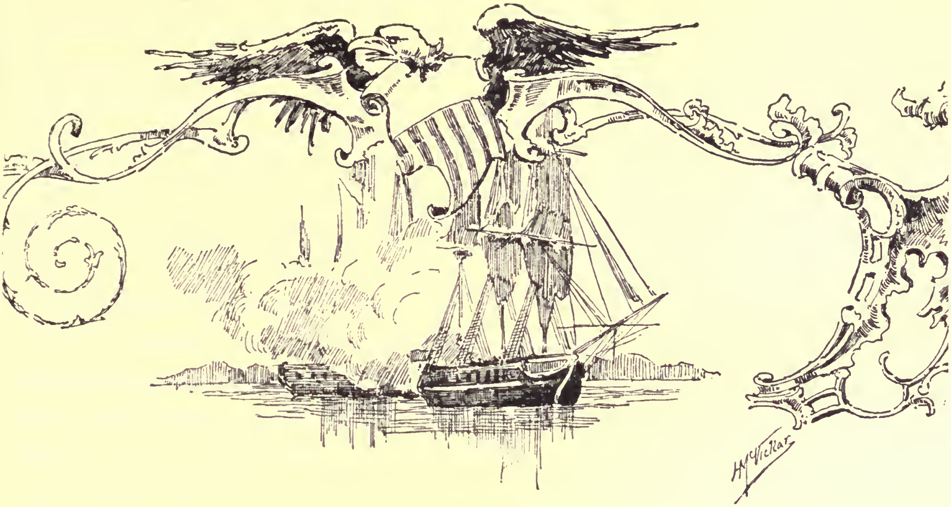
to their entreaties. Suddenly the men rested on the oars, and the boat stopped. Angrily the commodore demanded the cause of the stoppage, and was told that the men refused to row unless he sat down. With a smile he yielded, and soon the boat was alongside the "Niagara." Perry sprang to the deck, followed by his boat's crew and a plucky sailor who had swum just behind the boat across the long stretch of water. Hardly a glance did the commodore cast at the ship which he had left, but bent all his faculties to taking the new flag-ship into the battle.

The "Niagara" was practically a fresh ship; for, up to this time, she had held strangely aloof from the battle. Now all was to be changed. The battle-flag went to her masthead; and she plunged into the thick of the fight, striking thunderous blows at every ship she encountered. As she passed the American lines, the sailors greeted with cheers their gallant commander. The crippled "Lawrence," an almost helpless hulk, left far behind, was forced to strike her flag; although her crew protested loudly, crying out, "Sink the ship, and let us go down with her." But the conquered vessel was not destined to fall into the hands of her enemies. Already the sight of their commodore on a fresh vessel stimulated the American tars; so that in half an hour the British line was broken, their ships cut to pieces, and the "Detroit," their flag-ship, a prize to the "Niagara." A white handkerchief was waved at the end of a pike by one of the crew of the "Princess Charlotte." The firing stopped, the flag was again run up to the masthead of the "Lawrence," while a few feeble cheers came faintly over the water from the remnant of her crew.

The dense clouds of smoke blowing away, Perry saw, by the disposition of his squadron, that the victory was secure. Hastily catching off his navy-cap, he laid upon it a sheet of paper torn from an old letter, and wrote to Gen. Harrison the famous despatch, "*We have met the enemy, and they are ours, — two ships, two brigs, one schooner, and one sloop.*"

Then, with true chivalry, he determined that to his flag-ship "Lawrence," that had so stoutly borne the brunt of battle, should belong the honor of receiving the British captains, when they came to surrender their vessels. He returned to the "Lawrence;" but the scene there was such that even the excitement of victory could raise no feelings of exultation in his breast. He saw on every side the bodies of officers with whom, but the night before, he had dined in perfect health. The decks were red with blood, and from the cock-pit arose the groans of the wounded.

After the formal surrender, to make which the officers picked their way over the deck covered with slain to the quarter-deck, the work of burying the dead of both squadrons was begun. It was about sundown that the sad ceremonies were held; and, as the deep tones of the chaplains reading the burial-service arose upon the evening air, the dull, mournful splashing of heavy bodies in the water told that the last scene in the great victory was drawing to an end.



CHAPTER VIII.

ON THE OCEAN. — THE "HORNET" SINKS THE "PEACOCK." — THE BLOCKADE. — ADVENTURES OF THE "SALLY." — HOSTILITIES ON CHESAPEAKE BAY. — THE CRUISE OF THE "PRESIDENT."

THE year 1813, that brought to American sailors upon the lakes such well-earned laurels, opened auspiciously for the stars and stripes upon the ocean. It will be remembered that the "Constitution," while on the cruise in the South Atlantic that ended with the destruction of the "Java," had left the "Hornet" off San Salvador, blockading the British ship "Bonne Citoyenne." For eighteen days the "Hornet" remained at her post. Her captain continually urged the enemy to come out and give him battle, but to no avail. The remembrance of his valuable cargo deterred the Englishman, and he remained snug in his harbor. Months after, when the occurrence became known in the United States, an unreasoning outcry was raised against the commander of the "Bonne Citoyenne" for thus avoiding the conflict; but naval men have always agreed that his action was wise and commendable.

After eighteen days' service on this blockade, the "Hornet" saw a British seventy-four bearing down upon her, bent upon releasing the treasure-ship. Against such odds it would have been folly to contend;

and the Americans, taking advantage of a dark night, slipped away, and were soon beyond pursuit. The vessel continued her cruise in the waters south of the equator, meeting with good fortune, and taking many valuable prizes, from one of which twenty-three thousand dollars in specie were taken. But her cruise was not destined to proceed without serious opposition.

On the 24th of February, as the "Hornet" was giving close chase to a suspicious brig near the mouth of the Demarara River, a second stranger was sighted in the offing. Giving no heed to the newly sighted vessel, the "Hornet" continued her chase until the rapidly approaching vessel was clearly made out to be a brig, flying the British flag, and evidently a man-of-war. The "Hornet" was immediately cleared for action; and the two hostile vessels began manœuvring for the weather-gage, as two scientific pugilists spar cautiously for an opening. In this contest of seamanship, Capt. Lawrence of the "Hornet" proved the victor; and a little after five o'clock in the afternoon, the two enemies stood for each other upon the wind, the "Hornet" having the weather-gage. As they rapidly neared each other, no sound was heard save the creaking of the cordage, and the dashing of the waves against the vessels' hulls. Not a shot was fired until the enemies were dashing past each other, going in opposite directions. The first broadsides were exchanged at half pistol-shot, with very unequal effects. The shot of the "Hornet" penetrated the hull of her antagonist, doing terrible execution; while the broadside let fly by the "Peacock" whistled through the rigging of the American ship, cutting away the pennant, and killing a topman, who was struck by a round shot, and dashed from his station in the mizzen-top, to fall mangled and lifeless into the sea.

Hardly were the ships clear, when the British captain put his helm hard up, — a manœuvre executed with the intention of securing a raking position. But the plan was balked by the cool seamanship of Capt. Lawrence, who quickly followed up the British vessel, and, getting a position on his quarter, poured in so rapid and accurate a fire that the enemy was fain to haul down his colors and confess defeat. The British ensign had hardly touched the deck, when it was run up again, with the union down, as a token of distress. At this sight, the Yankee tars, who had been cheering lustily over their quickly won victory, stopped their rejoicings, and set about giving assistance to the injured Britons with as hearty good-will as they had lately shown in their vigorous cannonade.

With all possible despatch, a boat was lowered, and Lieut. Shubrick proceeded on board the prize. He found the "Peacock" a complete wreck. Shortly after the surrender her main-mast had gone by the board, and her hull was fairly honeycombed with shot-holes. Returning to his ship, Shubrick reported the condition of the prize. He was immediately ordered to return to the "Peacock," and make every effort to save her. Accompanied by three boats' crews of American sailors, he again boarded the sinking ship, and bent every energy to the attempt for her salvation. Bulwarks were cut away, and the heavy guns were rolled out of the gaps thus made, and cast into the sea. Deep down in the hold, and swinging like spiders over the sides of the vessels, sailors tried to stop up with felt-covered blocks of wood the great holes through which the water was pouring. All the time boats were plying between the sinking vessel and the "Hornet," transferring the wounded and the prisoners. Twilight fell before the work was ended, and it became evident to all that the "Peacock" must sink during the night. But the end came even quicker than had been expected. Some new rent must have opened in the brig's side; for, with a sudden lurch, she commenced to sink rapidly, bow foremost. Several of the English crew were below, searching for liquor; and, caught by the inpouring flood, they found a watery grave in the sinking hulk. Three Americans were also ingulfed; and five narrowly escaped death by climbing up the rigging to the foretop, which remained above water when the hull rested upon the bottom. In the midst of the excitement and confusion, four British seamen slyly clambered out of the cabin-windows, and, dropping into a boat that was made fast to the stern, made off in the darkness. The Americans, eagerly watching the sinking ship, did not detect the fugitives until the boat was far beyond the possibility of recapture.

The vessel so quickly destroyed by the "Hornet" was the British man-of-war brig "Peacock," mounting ten guns, and carrying a crew of two hundred and ten men. In one respect, she was a model ship. Among naval men, she had long been known as "the yacht," on account of the appearance of exquisite neatness she always presented. Her decks were as white as lime-juice and constant holystoning could keep them.

The brass-work about the cabins and the breeches of the guns was dazzling in its brilliancy. White canvas lined the breechings of the carronades. Her decks everywhere showed signs of constant toil in the cause of cleanliness. The result of the battle, however, seemed to indicate that Capt. Peakes had erred, in that, while his ship was perfect, his men were bad marksmen, and poorly disciplined. While their shot were harmlessly passing through the rigging of the "Hornet," the Americans were pouring in well-directed broadsides, that killed and wounded thirty-eight men, and ended the action in fifteen minutes. The Americans lost but one man in the fight, though three more went down in the sinking prize.

Capt. Lawrence now found himself far from home, short of water, and crowded with prisoners. For a time, he feared that to these evils was to be added a second action, while his crew was still fatigued with the labors of the first. During the battle with the "Peacock," a second British man-of-war brig, the "Espiègle," lay quietly at anchor only four miles away. Why she had not joined in the strife, has never been explained. She was clearly visible from the tops of the "Hornet" throughout the action, and Lawrence expected every moment to see her bear down to the assistance of her consort. But she made no movement; and even after the fight ended, and the "Peacock" lay on the bottom of the ocean, the mysterious stranger awoke not from her lethargy. Not wishing to engage a second adversary while his ship was crowded with prisoners, Lawrence immediately left the scene of action, and laid his course for home. The homeward voyage was rapid and uneventful. No pains were spared to secure the comfort of the prisoners who crowded the ship. The British officers were treated with the greatest consideration; so that, as one said on quitting the ship, they "ceased to consider themselves as captives." The tars, who were consigned to the care of the blue-jackets in the forecastle, were met with less courtesy, but certainly with no less good feeling. They were not spared an occasional taunt or triumphant joke; but when it was learned that by the sinking of their ship the Britons had lost all their "toggery," the "Hornet's" lads turned to, and soon collected clothing enough to fit out each prisoner with a respectable kit.

It was the middle of March before the long, homeward voyage was ended, and the anchor was dropped in the snug harbor of Holmes's Hole in the island of Martha's Vineyard. The usual rejoicings followed the news of the victory. Lawrence was the hero of the hour; and songs innumerable appeared in the newspapers, extolling the courage and devotion of the brave lads of the "Hornet."

Indeed, the arrival of the "Hornet" with her glorious news came at an opportune moment, to cheer the spirits of the American people. The war had begun to assume a serious aspect. Continued reverses on the ocean had roused the British ministry to the fact that they were dealing with no contemptible enemy, and the word had gone forth that the Americans must be crushed into submission. Troops were hurriedly sent to Canada, and all the vessels that could be spared were ordered to the coast of the United States. The English had determined upon that most effective of all hostile measures, — a rigorous blockade of their enemy's coast. Up and down the coast from New Jersey to the Carolinas, British frigates and sloops kept up a constant patrol. Chesapeake Bay was their chief rendezvous; and the exploits of the blockading squadron stationed there, under Admiral Cockburn, led often to scenes more befitting savage warfare then the hostilities of two enlightened and civilized peoples. On the New England coast, the blockade was less severely enforced. The people of that section had been loud in their denunciations of the war; and the British hoped, by a display of moderation, to seduce the New Englanders from their allegiance to the United States, — a hope that failed utterly of fulfilment. Even had the British desired to enforce the blockade along the New England shore, the character of the coast, and the skill and shrewdness of the Yankee skippers, would have made the task of the blockaders a most difficult one.

The annals of the little seafaring villages along the coast of Maine and Massachusetts abound in anecdotes of hardy skippers who outwitted the watchful British, and ran their little schooners or sloops into port under the very guns of a blockading man-of-war.

Among the blockade-runners of the New England coast, Capt. Dan Fernald of Portsmouth stood foremost. When a shipload of Maine timber was needed at the Portsmouth navy-yard, to be converted into a new man-of-war, to Capt. Fernald was assigned the task of bringing it down from Portland past the British frigates, that were ever on the watch for just such cargoes. When the preparations for the building of the seventy-four-gun ship "Washington" were making at the navy-yard, Capt. Fernald was sent to Portsmouth for a load of ship's-timber. His cargo was to consist of forty-eight "knees" and the breast-hook of the seventy-four. Loaded down with this burden, the schooner "Sally" left Portland, and headed for her destination. Caution led her captain to keep his craft close to the shore, and for a day or two she crept along the coast without being discovered. But head-winds and calms delayed the "Sally," and on her fourth day out she was sighted by the British frigate "Tenedos." The "Sally" was not an imposing craft, and under ordinary circumstances she might have been allowed to proceed unmolested; but on this occasion a number of the oaken knees for the new war-vessel were piled on the deck, and the British captain could clearly make out, through his glasses, that the "Sally" was laden with contraband of war. Accordingly, he set out in hot pursuit, in the full expectation of overhauling the audacious coaster. Capt. Fernald, however, had no idea of letting his schooner fall into the hands of the British. He was a wily old skipper, and knew every nook and corner of the Maine and New Hampshire coasts better than he knew the streets of his native village. Apparently unmoved by the pursuit of the man-of-war, he stood at the tiller, and, beyond ordering his crew to shake out the reefs in the sails, seemed to make no great attempt to elude the enemy. But soon the crew noticed that the skipper was taking his schooner rather dangerously close to the shore; and a cry came from a sailor on the bow, that the "Sally" was ploughing through the kelp, and would soon be on the rocks.

"No matter," sung out the captain; "just heave over a few of them knees, and I guess she'll float clear."

Overboard went a dozen heavy timbers, and the "Sally" sailed smoothly on over the rocks. Then the captain glanced back over his shoulder, and chuckled slyly as the majestic frigate, following closely in his track, brought up all of a sudden on the rocks, and was quickly left a fixture by the receding tide. The exasperated Englishman sent two eighteen-pound shot skipping over the water after the "Sally," but without effect. One shot buried itself in the sand of the beach; and Capt. Fernald, after picking up the knees that had been thrown overboard, coolly went ashore, dug up the ball, and carried it away as a trophy. He reached his moor ings at the navy-yard safely, and was warmly greeted by Commodore Hull, who asked if the "Sally" had been fired upon; and, on being presented with the eighteen-pound shot for a token, exclaimed, "You are a good fellow, and stand fire well."

The "Tenedos" came not so luckily out of the adventure. By the time a flood tide lifted her clear of the reef, the jagged points of the rocks had pierced her hull, so that she leaked badly, and was forced to go to Halifax for repairs.

One more adventure in which the "Sally" and her wily captain figured is worth recounting. Again the dingy schooner was edging her way along the rugged shore, bound for the Portsmouth navy-yard. No vessel could have seemed more harmless. Her patched and dirty canvas was held in place by oft-spliced ropes and rigging none too taut. Her bluff bows butted away the waves in clouds of spray, that dashed over the decks, which seldom received other washing. Her cargo seemed to be cordwood, neatly split, and piled high on deck. While off Casco, the wind dropped down, and the "Sally" was left floating idly upon the glassy ocean. Far in the distance lay an English man-o'-war, also becalmed; but from which a long-boat, stoutly manned, soon put out, and made for the becalmed schooner. The boat was soon within hail, and a trim young officer in the stern-sheets sung out, —

"What craft's that?"

"Schooner 'Sally' of Portsmouth," came the answer, in the drawling tones of a down-east skipper.

"Where from?"

"Portland."

"Where bound?"

"Portsmouth."

"What's your cargo."

"Firewood," responded Capt. Fernald with a carelessness he was far from feeling; for deep down in the hold, under the cord-wood, were two twenty-four-pounder cannon, thirteen thousand pounds of powder, and about one hundred boarding pikes and cutlasses.

The British officer hesitated a moment, as if the little coaster was of too little importance for further examination.

"Well, I think I'll come aboard," said he carelessly, and soon stood with three or four of his men on the deck of the "Sally."

After glancing contemptuously about the ill-kept decks, he turned to his men with the sharp order: "Clear away some of that wood from the hatchways, and see what's in the hold."

The men set to work, passing the cord-wood away from the hatchways, and piling it upon the after-deck. Soon they had worked their way into the hold, and were going deeper and deeper down toward the munitions of war. Capt. Fernald's blood seemed to stop coursing in his veins. He knew that but one layer of cord-wood then lay above the cannon, and he expected every instant to see the black iron uncovered. But the British officer grew impatient.

"That's enough of that work," said he; "there's nothing but wood there. Captain, you can proceed on your course."

A momentary murmur arose from the English sailors. The "Sally" was theirs by right of capture, and they saw no reason for her liberation. "Why, lads," said the officer, "it would cost just as much to get this poor fellow's wood-schooner condemned as it would a large ship. As for the prize-money, it would not make a penny apiece." So, tumbling into their boat, the jackies pulled away; shouting to the captain of the "Sally" to stow his cargo again, or his old tub would capsize. Capt. Fernald took their jeers good-naturedly, for he was the victor in that encounter.

The occurrence had been observed from the shore; and, when the British sailors were seen swarming over the side of the "Sally," a horseman set off for Portsmouth to notify Commodore Hull that the schooner was captured. It was a sore blow; for the guns and powder were thought to be lost, and munitions of war were hard to be had at that time. But Hull soon threw aside the disappointment, and was busily engaged with plans for the vessels then building, when a sentry came in, and reported the "Sally" in sight. Hull rushed to the water-side. Sure enough, there came the battered old schooner, butting her way through the waves of the channel; and, before long, the two cannon were safe in the storehouses, while Capt. Fernald found himself vested with a reputation for almost superhuman sagacity and luck.

Not all the encounters between the blockaders and the blockade-runners terminated so happily for the Americans. Many a coasting-vessel was sent to Halifax to swell the coffers of the British prize-courts, or, after being set on fire, was left to lie charred and ruined upon the rocky shore, as a warning to all who violated the blockade.

The capture of one United States war-vessel graced the English naval annals of January, 1813; for the little brig "Viper," carrying twelve guns, fell in the way of the British, thirty-two, "Narcissus," and straightway surrendered to the overwhelming force of her enemy.

Among the United States war-vessels caught and held in port by the blockade was the frigate "Constellation." She was at the opening of the war the favorite ship of the American navy; her exploits in the war with France having endeared her to the American people, and won for her among Frenchmen the name of "the Yankee race-horse." Notwithstanding her reputation for speed, she is said to have been very crank, and had an awkward way of getting on her beam-ends without much provocation. An almost incredible tale is told of her getting "knocked down" by a squall while chasing a French privateer, and, notwithstanding the delay, finally overhauling and capturing the chase.

When war was declared with England, the "Constellation" was so thoroughly dismantled, that some months were occupied in refitting before she was ready to put to sea. In January, 1813, she dropped anchor in Hampton Roads, expecting to set out on an extended cruise the next morning. Had she been a day earlier, her career in the War of 1812 might have added new lustre to her glorious record in the war with France; but the lack of that day condemned her to inglorious inactivity throughout the war: for on that very night a British squadron of line-of-battle ships and frigates dropped anchor a few miles down the bay, and the "Constellation" was fairly trapped.

When, by the gray light of early morning, the lookout on the "Constellation" saw the British fleet lying quietly at their anchorage down the bay, he reported to Capt. Stewart; and the latter saw that, for a time, he must be content to remain in port. Stewart's reputation for bravery and devotion to his country leaves no doubt that the prospect of prolonged idleness was most distasteful to him. But he had little time to mourn over his disappointment. The position of the frigate was one of great danger. At any moment she might be exposed to attack by the hostile fleet. Accordingly, she dropped down abreast of Craney Island, where she was secure from attack by the British vessels, but still open to the assaults of their boats.

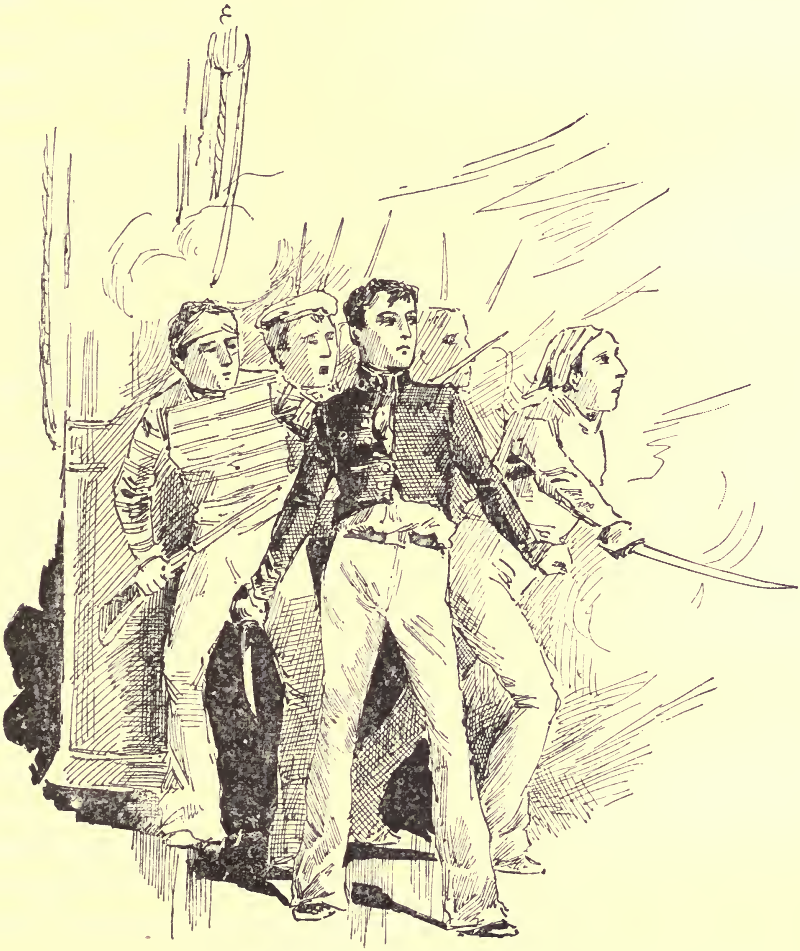
To meet this danger, Capt. Stewart took the most elaborate precautions. His ship was anchored in the middle of the narrow channel; and on either side were anchored seven gunboats, officered and manned by the men of the frigate. Around the gunboats and frigate extended a vast circle of floating logs, linked together by heavy chains, that no boarders might come alongside the vessels. The great frigate towered high above the surrounding gunboats, her black sides unbroken by an open port; for the gun-deck ports were lashed down, and the guns housed. Not a rope's end was permitted to hang over the side; the stern ladders were removed, and the gangway cleats knocked off. An enemy might as well hope to scale the unbroken front of a massive wall of masonry, as that dark, forbidding hull. From the bulwarks rose on all sides, to the ends of the yards, a huge net made of ratlin stuff, boiled in pitch until it would turn the edge of a cutlass, and further strengthened by nail-rods and small chains. The upper part of the netting was weighted with kentledge, the pigs of iron used for ballast; so that, should the hardy assailants succeed in coming alongside and scaling the side, a few blows of an axe would let fall the heavily weighted nettings, sweeping the boarders into the sea, and covering boats and men with an impenetrable mesh, under which they would be at the mercy of the sailors on the frigate's decks. The carronades and howitzers were loaded with grape; and the officers and men felt that only bravery on their part was essential to the defeat of any force that Great Britain could send against the ship.

Heedless of these formidable preparations for their reception, the enemy set under way two expeditions for the capture of the "Constellation." In neither case did the antagonists actually come to blows, for the approach of the British was discovered before they came within pistol-shot; and, as their only chance lay in surprising the Americans, they retired without striking a blow. The coming of the first expedition was known upon the "Constellation" the day before it actually set out. A Portuguese merchantman, trying to beat out of the bay, had been stopped by the British, and anchored a few miles below the American frigate. A guard and lookout from the English fleet were stationed on the Portuguese to watch the "Constellation." In an unguarded moment, these men let fall a hint of the movement under way; and an American passenger on the Portuguese vessel quickly carried the news to Capt. Stewart, and volunteered to remain and aid in the defence. The next night was dark and drizzly; and the British, to the number of two thousand, set out in boats for the "Constellation." Hardly were they within gun-shot, when two lanterns gleamed from the side of a watchful guard-boat; and the roll of drums and sound of hurrying feet aboard the frigate told that the alarm was given. The assailants thereupon abandoned the adventure, and returned to their ship. The next night they returned, but again retreated discomfited. Several nights later, a third expedition came up. This time the guard-boat was far down the bay; and, seeing the huge procession of boats, the Americans calmly edged in among them, and for some time rowed along, listening to the conversation of the British, who never dreamed that an enemy could be in their midst. Suddenly a sailor, more sharp-eyed than the rest, caught sight of the interlopers; and the cry was raised, "A stranger!" The Americans tugged at their oars, and were soon lost to sight; but, not being pursued, returned, and accompanied their foes up the bay, and even anchored with the flotilla at a point above the "Constellation." The enemy, finding the Americans constantly on the watch, abandoned their designs on the ship, and vowed that Capt. Stewart must be a Scotchman, as he could never be caught napping. Some days later, an officer, sent with a flag of truce to the British fleet, vastly chagrined the officers there by repeating their remarks overheard by the guard-boat officers who joined the British flotilla in the dark. These three escapes confirmed the reputation borne by the "Constellation," as a "lucky ship;" and although she remained pent up in port throughout the war, doing nothing for her country, her luck was unquestioned in the minds of the sailors. With her they classed the "Constitution" and "Enterprise," while the "Chesapeake" and "President" were branded as unlucky. Certainly the career of these ships in the War of 1812 went far to confirm the superstitious belief of the sailors.

In the course of the next two months, Chesapeake Bay was the scene of two gallant adventures, in which American privateersmen were opposed to the British sailors. On Feb. 8, the privateer schooner "Lottery" was standing down the bay under easy sail, out-bound on a voyage to Bombay. The schooner was one of the clipper-built craft, for which Baltimore ship-builders were famous the world over. Her battery consisted of six twelve-pounder carronades, and her crew numbered twenty-five men. Near the point at which the noble bay opens into the Atlantic ocean, a narrow sheet of water extends into the Virginia shore, winding in sinuous courses several miles inland. This is known as Lynnhaven Bay; and on its placid surface there lay, on the morning of the "Lottery's" appearance, four powerful frigates flying the British flag. From their tops the approaching schooner could be seen across the low-lying neck of land that separated the smaller bay from the main body of water. The cry of "Sail, ho!" roused the fleet to sudden activity; and an expedition of two hundred men was quickly organized to proceed against the privateer. Fortune seemed to favor the British; for hardly had the boats left the fleet, when the fresh breeze died away, and the schooner was left at the mercy of the boats, which, propelled by the long, swinging strokes of man-o'-war oarsmen, bore down rapidly upon her. Capt. Southcomb of the "Lottery" was an American sailor, who had smelt powder before; and he had no idea of yielding up his ship without a struggle. The formidable force sent against him merely moved him to more desperate resistance. When the boats came within range, the guns of the "Lottery" opened upon them with a hail of grape and round shot. Still the assailants pressed on, and soon came beneath the schooner's lee. Dropping their oars, the plucky British tars sprang into the chains, swarmed up the bobstay and over the bow, and used each other's backs as ladders to aid them to reach the schooner's deck. The little crew of privateersmen fought viciously, guarding the side with cutlasses and pistols, hurling the boarders back into the sea, or cutting them down as they reached the deck. Cold shot and kentledge were dashed upon the boats, in the hopes of sinking them; while the carronades poured a destructive fire upon such boats as could be reached by their shot. But the conflict was too unequal to last long. The English sailors swarmed over the gunwale on all sides, and, cheering lustily, drove the small remnant of defenders below. Capt. Southcomb was cut down, and lay mortally wounded upon the deck when the enemy took possession of the ship. When the victors came to look about the captured vessel, they found such proofs of a desperate resistance, that their admiration was open and pronounced. Five only of the schooner's crew were unhurt, while the British paid for their success with the loss of thirteen men.

Capt. Southcomb, in a dying condition, was taken aboard the frigate "Belvidera," where he received the tenderest treatment, and was shown marked respect on account of his bravery.

In the next encounter between the blockaders and a privateer, the British bore away the palm for gallantry. This time the privateersmen had every advantage, while the British carried the day by pure courage. The captured vessels were the privateer schooner "Dolphin," of twelve guns, and the letters-of-marque "Racer," "Arab," and "Lynx," of six guns each. The crews of the four vessels aggregated one hundred and



AWAITING THE BOARDERS.

sixty men. Against this force came five boats manned by one hundred and five British sailors, who pulled fifteen miles in order to attack their foes. Wearied though they were by the long pull, the sight of the privateers seemed to arouse new strength in the plucky tars; and, without a thought of the odds against them, they dashed forward, cheering, and calling upon the Americans to surrender. Had the four schooners been manned by such brave men as those who defended the "Lottery," the assailants might have been beaten off. As it was, two vessels surrendered without firing a shot. The crew of the "Racer" fought pluckily for a time, but were soon overpowered, and the vessel's guns turned upon the "Dolphin." When fire was opened upon this last vessel, her crew, affrighted, leaped overboard from every side; and the "Dolphin" was soon in the hands of her enemies, who had lost but thirteen men in the whole action.

Many a gallant adventure, such as this, is to be laid to the credit of the British tars on the American station during the continuance of the blockade. Right dashing fellows were they, at cutting out a coasting-schooner as she lay under the guns of some American earthworks. The lads that have won for England her supremacy upon the seas have never been behindhand at swarming up the sides of an enemy, leaping his taffrail, and meeting him on his own deck with the cold steel. And as the year rolled on, and the blockade along the American coast was made more strict, the meetings between the enemies became more frequent. From every seaport town, Yankee privateers were waiting to escape to sea; and they seldom won clear without a brush with the watchful enemy. The British, too, had begun to fit out privateers, though American commerce offered but little enticement for these mercenary gentry. Between the ships of the two private armed navies, encounters were common; and the battles were often fought with courage and seamanship worthy of the regular navy.

Little glory was won by the navy of the United States during the opening months of the year. Many ships were laid up in port; while some, like the "Constellation," were blockaded by the enemy. The "President" and the "Congress" managed to get to sea from Boston in April, and entered upon a protracted cruise, in which the bad luck of the former ship seemed to pursue her with malevolent persistence. The two ships parted after cruising in company for a month, and scoured the ocean until the following December, when they returned home, experiencing little but continual disappointments. The "Congress" could report only the capture of four British merchantmen, as the result of her eight months' cruise; while the long service had so seriously injured her hull, that she was condemned as unseaworthy, and ended her career, a dismantled hulk reduced to the ignoble service of store-ship at a navy-yard.

The "President" was little more fortunate in her search for prizes. After parting with her consort, she beat about in the vicinity of the Gulf Stream, in the hopes of getting a ship or two returning from the West Indies. But day after day passed, and no ship appeared. Changing his plan, Commodore Rodgers made for the North Sea, feeling sure that there he would find in plenty the marine game for which he was seeking. But, to his astonishment, not an English ship was to be found. It was then the middle of summer, and the frigate had been at sea for nearly three months. The jackies on the forecastle were weary of the long voyage, and fairly at the end of their occupations for "teasing time." The officers, well knowing the effect of long idleness upon the sailors, were tireless in devising means of employment. The rigging was set up weekly, so that the shrouds and stays were like lines drawn with a ruler. Enough rope-yarn was pulled, and spun-yarn spun, to supply a navy-yard for months. Laggards were set to scrubbing the rust off the chain cables, and sharpening with files the flukes of the anchors. When such work failed, the men were drilled in the use of cutlasses and single sticks; forming long lines down the gun-deck, and slashing away with right good will at the word of the instructor. But the monotony of a long cruise without a prize cannot long be beguiled by such makeshifts; and it was with the heartiest pleasure that the sailors heard that the commodore had determined to put into port for a time, and take on board stores.

It was North Bergen, Norway, that Rodgers chose for this purpose; and an unfortunate choice it proved to be, for a famine prevailed in the country, and only water could be obtained for the ship. Leaving the inhospitable port, the "President" was soon again upon the ocean. She quickly took two British merchantmen, from which she replenished her stores. Shortly after, two hostile frigates hove in sight, and the "President" fled for her life before them for more than eighty hours. At that season, in those high latitudes, no friendly darkness settled over the ocean to give the fugitive a chance to escape. Bright daylight persisted throughout the chase, and the sun never dipped below the horizon. Sheer good sailing saved the American frigate, and enabled her to leave her pursuers far in her wake.

For some days thereafter, better luck seemed to attend the frigate that so pluckily kept up her operations in seas thousands of miles from a friendly port. With true Yankee audacity, she extended her cruise even into the Irish Channel, and there preyed upon British commerce until the enemy was moved to send a squadron to rout out the audacious intruder. Then Rodgers set sail for home.

On the voyage to the United States, the "President" captured a British armed schooner by a stratagem which taught at least one British officer to respect "Yankee cuteness."

It was near the last of September that the frigate was flying along before a fresh breeze. Her yards were spread with a cloud of snowy canvas, and the wind sung through the straining cordage a melody sweet to the ears of the sailor homeward bound. Towards evening, a small sail was made out in the distance; and, as time wore on, it was seen that she was rapidly approaching the "President." Rodgers surmised that the stranger might be a British vessel, and determined to lure her within range by strategy. In some way he had obtained knowledge of some of the private signals of the British navy; and in a few minutes from the masthead of the American frigate, there fluttered a row of flags which announced her as the British frigate "Sea-Horse." The stranger promptly responded, and was made out to be the schooner "Highflyer," a little craft noted for her sailing qualities. Unsuspectingly the "Highflyer" came under the stern of the American frigate, and waited for a boat to be sent aboard. Soon the boat came; and one of Rodgers's lieutenants, clad in British uniform, clambered up the side, and was received with due honor. He was the bearer of a message from Commodore Rodgers, requesting that the signal-books of the "Highflyer" be sent on board the fictitious "Sea-Horse" for comparison and revision. This the British captain hastened to do, and soon followed his books to the deck of the frigate, where a lieutenant met him, clothed in full British uniform. A file of marines, dressed in the scarlet coats of the British service, stood on the deck; and the duped Englishman greatly admired the appearance of the frigate, remarking to the officer who escorted him to Rodgers's cabin, that so trim a craft could only be found in His Majesty's service.

On entering the cabin, the English officer greeted Commodore Rodgers with deference, and proceeded at once to tell of naval matters.

"I have here," said he, placing a bundle of papers in the commodore's hands, "a numbers of despatches for Admiral Warren, who is on this station. You may not know that one of the principal objects of our squadron cruising here is the capture of the Yankee frigate 'President,' which has been greatly annoying British commerce."

Rodgers was naturally much interested in this statement, and asked the visitor if he knew much about the commander of the "President."

"I hear he is an odd fish," was the response; "and certainly he is devilish hard to catch."

Rodgers started. He had hardly expected so frank an expression of opinion.

"Sir," said he emphatically, "do you know what vessel you are on board of?"

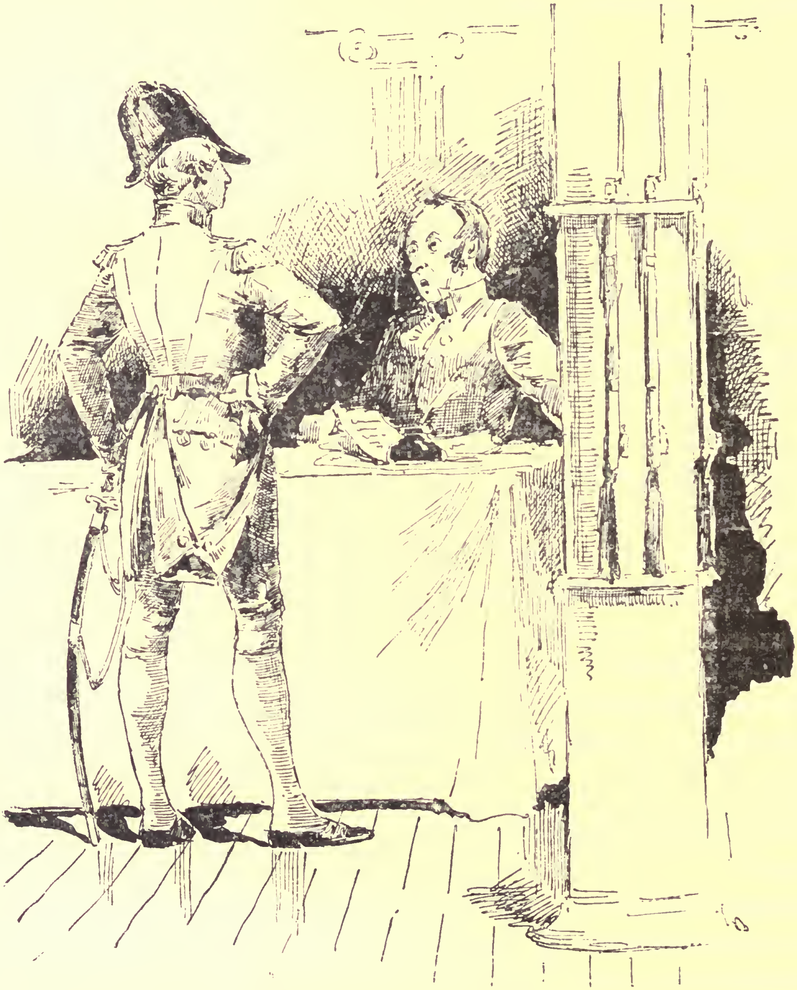
"Why, certainly, — on board of His Majesty's ship 'Sea-Horse.'"

"No, sir, you are mistaken," was the startling response. "You are on board of the United States frigate 'President,' and I am Commodore Rodgers."

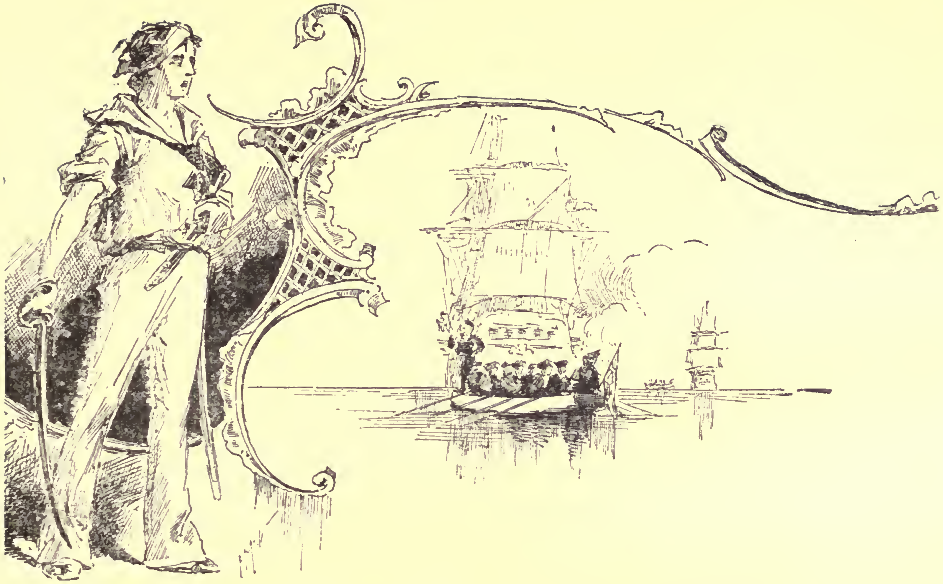
The astounded Englishman sprang to his feet, and rushed to the deck. The sight he saw there was still more startling. The quarter-deck was crowded with officers in United States uniform. The scarlet coats of the marines had vanished, and were replaced by Yankee blue. Even as he looked, the British flag came fluttering down, the American ensign went up, and the band struck up "Yankee Doodle."

Nothing was left to the Englishman but to submit; and, with the best grace possible, he surrendered his vessel and himself to the "odd fish," who had so cleverly trapped him.

Three days later, the "President," with her prize, and crowded with prisoners, dropped anchor in the harbor of Newport, after a cruise of one hundred and forty-eight days. In actual results, the cruise was far from satisfactory, for but eleven vessels had been taken. But the service rendered the country by annoying the enemy's merchantmen, and drawing the British war-vessels away in chase, was vast. At one time more than twenty British men-of-war were searching for the roving American frigate; and the seafaring people of the United States were thus greatly benefited by the "President's" prolonged cruise.



"I AM COMMODORE RODGERS."



CHAPTER IX.

DECATUR BLOCKADED AT NEW YORK.—ATTEMPTS TO ESCAPE THROUGH LONG ISLAND SOUND.—THE FLAG-SHIP STRUCK BY LIGHTNING.—TORPEDOES.—FULTON'S STEAM FRIGATE.—ACTION BETWEEN THE "CHESAPEAKE" AND "SHANNON."

WHILE the "President" was thus roaming the seas, almost within sight of the shores of the British Isles, events were occurring along the American coast which were little likely to raise the spirits of the people of the United States. From the "President," the "Congress," the "Essex," and the smaller vessels that were upholding the honor of the flag upon the ocean, they could hear nothing. But worse than this was it for the good people of New York or Boston to go down to the water-side and see stanch United States frigates kept in port by the overwhelming forces of the enemy, that lay watchfully outside the harbor's mouth.

For there was no doubt about it: the blockade was daily becoming closer; and in the months of April and May a ship would have found it a hard task to run out of New York Harbor without falling into the hands of the British fleet stationed there. But, at that very time, three stout men-of-war floated on the waves of that noble bay, under the command of an officer little used to staying quietly in port in time of war. The officer was Stephen Decatur: and the ships were the flag-ship "United States;" the captured "Macedonian," repaired, and flying the stars and stripes, under the command of the gallant Capt. Jacob Jones; and the sloop-of-war "Hornet," Capt. Biddle.

With this force under his command, Decatur burned with the desire to get to sea. The watchfulness of the British at the Narrows made it useless to think of escaping that way: therefore, he determined to pass up the sound, and reach the ocean by way of the opening between Montauk Point and Block Island. At the very outset of this voyage, however, was a serious obstacle. Through the narrow channel of the East River, between Ward's Island and the Long Island shore, the tides rushed with a mad speed and turbulence, that had won for the strait the significant name of Hell Gate. The United States Government had not then bent its energies to undermining and blowing into bits the jagged rocks that at low tide reared their crests above the swirling eddies. With its tides like mill races, and rocks hidden beneath the treacherous water, Hell Gate was a fearful place for any ship to make its way through with the uncertain aid of sails alone. Still greater were its dangers for the ponderous and deep-laden men-of-war, that required deep water and plenty of sea-room for their movements. Such considerations, however, had no weight with Decatur, who had seen his ships lying idly at their anchorage off Staten Island long enough. In the night of May 24, he accordingly got up anchors and started for the sound.

Hell Gate was passed safely, thanks to a skilful pilot, whom neither the darkness of the night, nor the perils of the narrow channel, could daunt. Once past this danger, the three vessels made their way up the sound, with the flag-ship leading. They had gone but a little way when black clouds to the westward told of a coming storm. The cloud-bank came rolling up rapidly; and soon, with a burst of rain, the three vessels were enveloped in the thunder-shower. The lightning flashed through the black clouds, the thunder crashed and roared, and the wind shrieked fiercely through the cordage. The "United States" held her place at the head of the squadron; while behind, at the distance of half a cable's-length, came the "Macedonian." Suddenly the men on the deck of the latter vessel were horrified to see a jagged flash of lightning cut its zigzag course through the clouds, then dart, straight as an arrow, at the main-mast of the "United States." Hoarse cries were heard from the deck of the stricken frigate; and the captain of the "Macedonian," fearing lest the "States" should blow up, threw all aback on his ship, to escape the explosion. But happily the thunderbolt had done little serious injury. In its course it had cut away the pendant; shot into the doctor's cabin, extinguishing that worthy's candle, to his vast astonishment; then, gliding away, broke through the ship's hull near the water-line, and plunged into the sea, after ripping off a few sheets of copper from the ship's bottom. No delay was caused by the accident; though the superstitious sailors pronounced it an evil omen, and dismally predicted all sorts of disasters.

On the 29th of May the squadron reached the strait through which Decatur hoped to gain the ocean; but, to the intense disappointment of all on board, a formidable British fleet barred all egress. Three days later the Americans made an attempt to slip out unseen; but, failing in this, they returned to New London harbor, where the two frigates were kept rotting in the mud until the war was ended. The "Hornet" luckily managed to run the blockade, and of her exploits we shall hear later.

Upon the arrival of the three American ships at New London, the enemy guarded the coast with renewed vigilance. The inhabitants made every attempt to drive away the blockaders; and in the course of this prolonged struggle there appeared, for almost the first time in the history of warfare, that most terrible of offensive weapons, the submarine torpedo.

During the Revolution, two attempts had been made to blow up British men-of-war by means of torpedoes, invented by a Saybrook mechanic named Bushnell. Though the attempts failed, 'yet the torpedoes demonstrated their tremendous power. Before the declaration of the second war with England, Robert Fulton, the inventor of the steamboat, had made many improvements upon Bushnell's designs, and had so thoroughly spread the knowledge of torpedo warfare that it suggested itself to many New Englanders as a means of driving the enemy from their coast.

The first attempt was well planned, but failed through an entirely accidental combination of circumstances. Certain private citizens (for in that day it was thought ignoble for a government to embark in torpedo warfare) fitted out in New York a schooner, the "Eagle," in the hold of which ten kegs of powder, together with sulphur and piles of heavy stones, were placed. In the head of one of the casks were two gun-locks, primed, and held in place by two barrels of flour. Should either of the barrels be moved, the lock would spring, and the terrible mine would explode with tremendous force. With this dreadful engine of destruction, carefully covered by a cargo of flour and naval stores, the "Eagle" left New York, and made her way up the bay, until, near New London, she was overhauled and captured by the British frigate "Ramillies." Boats were sent out by the English to take possession of the prize; but the crew of the "Eagle," seeing the enemy coming, took to their small boats, and succeeded in safely reaching the shore. The captors, on boarding the vessel, were vastly pleased to find that its cargo consisted largely of flour, of which the "Ramillies" stood in great need. They at once attempted to get the frigate alongside the prize, that the captured cargo might be readily transferred. But a calm had fallen, and two hours' constant work with sweeps and towing was unavailing. Accordingly, this plan of action was abandoned, and the boats were ordered to lighter the cargo from the "Eagle" to the frigate. Hardly had the first barrel been moved, when, with a roar, and rush of flame and smoke as from a volcano, the schooner blew up. Huge timbers, stones, and barrels were sent flying high into the air. The lieutenant and ten men from the frigate, who were on the "Eagle" at the time, were blown to atoms; and the timbers and missiles, falling on all sides, seriously injured many men in the boats near by. Had the frigate been alongside, where her commander had endeavored to place her, she would have gone to the bottom, with all her crew.

An attempt so nearly successful as this could not be long in leading others to make similar ventures. Sir Thomas Hardy, the commander of the "Ramillies," was kept in a constant fever of apprehension, lest some night his ship should be suddenly sent to the bottom by one of the insidious torpedoes. Several times the ship was attacked; and her escapes were so purely matters of accident, that she seemed almost to be under the protection of some sailors' deity. A Norwich mechanic, who had invented a submarine boat with a speed of three miles an hour, succeeded in getting under the bottom of the blockader three times, but was each time foiled in his attempt to attach a torpedo to the ship's hull. Another American, a fisherman, succeeded in getting alongside in a whale-boat, unobserved, but was driven away before he could get his torpedo in position. Such constant attacks so alarmed Hardy, that at last he gave up bringing his ship to anchor, keeping her continually under way, and, as a further precaution, causing her bottom to be swept every two hours throughout the day and night.

The use of torpedoes was not confined to the people of New England. New York Harbor was closed with a row of them. The British seventy-four "Plantagenet," lying off Cape Henry, Virginia, was nearly sunk by one in the charge of Mr. Mix, an American naval officer. The attack was made near ten o'clock, on an unusually dark night. Mix and his associates pulled in a heavy boat to a point near the bow of the menaced vessel. The torpedo was then slipped into the water, with the clockwork which was to discharge it set in motion. The rushing tide carried the destructive engine down toward the frigate; and the Americans pulled away into the darkness, to await the explosion. But the clockwork had been badly adjusted, and the torpedo exploded just before it reached the ship. A huge column of water, gleaming with a ghostly sulphurous light, was thrown high in the air, falling with terrific force on the deck of the frigate, which was almost capsized by the shock.

A veritable storm of abuse and condemnation followed the introduction of torpedo warfare. All countries and all peoples pronounced it treacherous and cowardly, and the English press was particularly loud in its denunciations. Yet the torpedo had won its place in the armaments of nations; and to-day we see all the nations of Europe vieing with each other in the invention and construction of powerful and accurate torpedoes and swift torpedo-boats.

The germ of another feature of modern naval organization is to be found in the annals of the War of 1812. The first war-vessel propelled by steam was launched by the Americans for service in this war. She was designed by Robert Fulton, and bore the name of "Fulton the First." In model she was a queer craft, with two hulls like a catamaran, with the single propelling-wheel mounted between them amidships. Her armament was to consist of thirty thirty-two-pounder guns, and two one-hundred-pounder columbiads. A secondary engine was designed to throw floods of water upon the decks and through the port-holes of an enemy. While the vessel was building, reports concerning her reached England; and soon the most ludicrously exaggerated accounts of her power were current in that country. "She mounts forty-four guns," said an English paper, "four of which are one-hundred-pounders, mounted in bomb-proofs, and defended by thousands of boarding-pikes and cutlasses wielded by steam; while showers of boiling water are poured over those boarders who might escape death from the rapidly whirling steel." Unfortunately for the American cause, this much dreaded vessel did not get into the water in time to take any active part in the war.

In June, 1813, while the British blockaders in the Sound were exercising all their ingenuity to keep of the torpedoes, there was fought off the Massachusetts coast, near Boston, an engagement which must go down to history as one of the most brilliant naval duels of the age of sails. The United States frigate "Chesapeake" was refitting at Boston, after a cruise of four months, during which she had more than justified her reputation as an unlucky ship. Though she sailed the waters most frequented by British merchantmen, she returned to port having captured only four vessels. Three men-of-war were sighted, but could not be spoken. Strangely enough, the frigate sailed over the spot where lay the sunken "Peacock" the very day after the "Hornet" had fought her famous fight. Ill-luck pursued the hapless ship even to her home port; for, as she was entering the port of Boston, a sudden squall carried away the topmast, with several men who were aloft at the time.

When the "Hornet" reached port, after her victory over the "Peacock," her gallant captain, James Lawrence, was appointed to the command of the "Chesapeake." On reaching his ship, he found affairs in a desperate condition. The sailors who had sailed on the long and unproductive cruise were firmly convinced that the frigate's bad luck was beyond remedy. The term of enlistment of many had expired, and they were daily leaving the ship. Those who remained were sullen, and smarting under fancied ill-treatment in the matter of the prize-money. To get fresh seamen was no easy task. Great fleets of privateers were being fitted out; and sailors generally preferred to sail in these vessels, in which the discipline was light, and the gains usually great. Some sailors from the "Constitution" were induced to join the "Chesapeake;" and these, with the remnant of the frigate's old crew, formed the nucleus of a crew which was filled up with merchant-sailors and foreigners of all nations. Before the lists were fairly filled, the ship put to sea, to give battle to an adversary that proved to be her superior.

The events leading to the action were simple, and succeeded each other hurriedly. The port of Boston was blockaded by two British frigates, the "Tenedos" thirty-eight, and the "Shannon" thirty-eight. The latter vessel was under the command of Capt. Philip Bowes Vere Broke, a naval officer of courage, skill, and judgment. His crew was thoroughly disciplined, and his ship a model of efficiency. No officer in the service understood better than he the difference between the discipline of a martinet and the discipline of a prudent and sagacious commander. His ship might not, like the "Peacock," merit the title of "the yacht;" but for active service she was always prepared. James, an English naval historian, turns from his usual occupation of explaining the American naval victories by belittling the British ships, and enormously magnifying the power of the victors, to speak as follows of the "Shannon:" —

"From the day on which he [Capt. Broke] joined her, the 14th of September, 1806, the 'Shannon' began to feel the effect of her captain's proficiency as a gunner, and zeal for the service. The laying of the ship's ordnance so that it may be correctly fired in a horizontal direction is justly deemed a most important operation, as upon it depends, in a great measure, the true aim and destructive effect of the shot; this was attended to by Capt. Broke in person. By drafts from other ships, and the usual means to which a British man-of-war is obliged to resort, the 'Shannon' got together a crew; and in the course of a year or two, by the paternal care and excellent regulations of Capt. Broke, the ship's company became as pleasant to command as it was dangerous to meet." Moreover, the historian goes on to relate that the ship's guns were carefully sighted, and her ammunition frequently overhauled. Often a cask would be thrown overboard, and a gun's crew suddenly called to sink it as it bobbed about on the waves astern. Practice with the great guns was of daily occurrence. "Every day for about an hour and a half in the forenoon, when not prevented by chase or the state of the weather, the men were exercised at training the guns; and for the same time in the afternoon in the use of the broad-sword, musket, pike, etc. Twice a week the crew fired at targets, both with great guns and musketry; and Capt. Broke, as an additional stimulus beyond the emulation excited, gave a pound of tobacco to every man that put a shot through the bull's-eye."

Such was the vessel that in June appeared alone off the entrance to Boston Harbor, and by her actions seemed to challenge the "Chesapeake" to give her battle. Indeed, Broke's wish to test the strength of the two vessels was so great, that he sent in, by the hands of an American prisoner, a written challenge, the terms and spirit of which showed the writer to be a courageous and chivalric officer and gentleman. "As the 'Chesapeake' now appears ready for sea," he wrote, "I request you will do me the honor to meet the 'Shannon' with her, ship to ship, to try the fortunes of our respective flags. To an officer of your character, it requires some apology for proceeding to further particulars. Be assured, sir, it is not from any doubt I can entertain of your wishing to close with my proposal, but merely to provide an answer to any objection which might be made, and very reasonably, upon the chance of our receiving any unfair support." Capt. Broke then proceeds to assure Lawrence that the other British ships in the neighborhood would be sent away before the day of combat. To the challenge was appended a careful statement of the strength of the "Shannon," that Lawrence might understand that the ships were fairly matched.

But before this challenge reached Boston, Lawrence had set out to seek the enemy. He had seen the "Shannon" lying off the entrance to the port; and, finding out that she was alone, he knew that her presence was in itself a challenge that he could not honorably ignore. Nor did he desire to avoid the battle thus offered. He had confidence in his crew, his frigate, and himself, and looked for nothing but victory. To the Secretary of the Navy, he wrote, "An English frigate is now in sight from my deck. I have sent a pilot-boat out to reconnoitre; and, should she be alone, I am in hopes to give a good account of her before night. My crew appear to be in fine spirits, and I hope will do their duty."

In truth, however, the condition of this same crew was such that the captain would have been justified in refusing the challenge. An unusual number of foreign sailors were enrolled, among whom was a Portuguese, who, in the ensuing battle, did incalculable injury to the cause of the "Chesapeake." The crew had never drilled together; many of the sailors came on board only a few hours before the ship sailed out to battle. All the old sailors were sullen over the delay in the payment of the prize-money of their last cruise. Lawrence attempted to allay their discontent by giving them checks for the prize-money; but the sense of injury still lingered in the minds of the men, and they were ill-fitted to do battle for the honor of the flag. Added to this evil was the fact that the first and second lieutenants and two acting lieutenants were away on sick-leave, and the ship was thus left short of officers on the eve of battle.

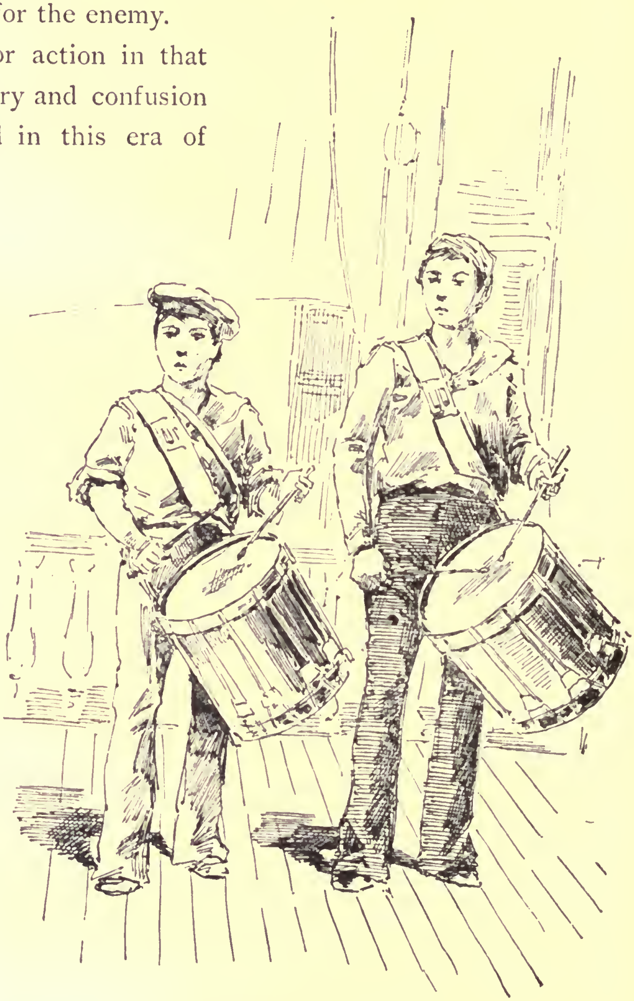
Regardless of the disadvantages under which he labored, Lawrence weighed anchor on the 1st of June, and started down the harbor. As he approached the ocean, Lawrence mustered his crew aft, and eloquently urged them to fight bravely, and do their duty to the country, which had entered upon this war in defence of seamen and their rights. Three ensigns were run up; and at the fore was unfurled a broad white flag, bearing the motto, "FREE TRADE AND SAILORS' RIGHTS." When Lawrence closed his speech, and pointed out the flag floating at the fore, the men cheered and went forward, leaving the captain convinced that he could depend upon their loyalty.

The morning was bright and cool, with a fresh breeze blowing, before which the "Chesapeake" rapidly bore down upon the foe that awaited her. Following cautiously in her track came a number of small craft, — pilot-boats, sloops, fishing-smacks, and pleasure-boats, — that had come down the bay to see the outcome of the battle. Hundreds of people of Boston rode along the coast, in hopes of gaining an outlook from which the progress of the fight might be viewed.

At noon the ship rounded Boston Light, and made out into the open sea. The "Shannon" went ahead, under easy sail, making up the coast toward Salem. Towards five o'clock the "Chesapeake" luffed up for a moment; while the pilot clambered down the side, and put off in a small boat. A gun was then fired, as a signal that the Americans were ready for action.

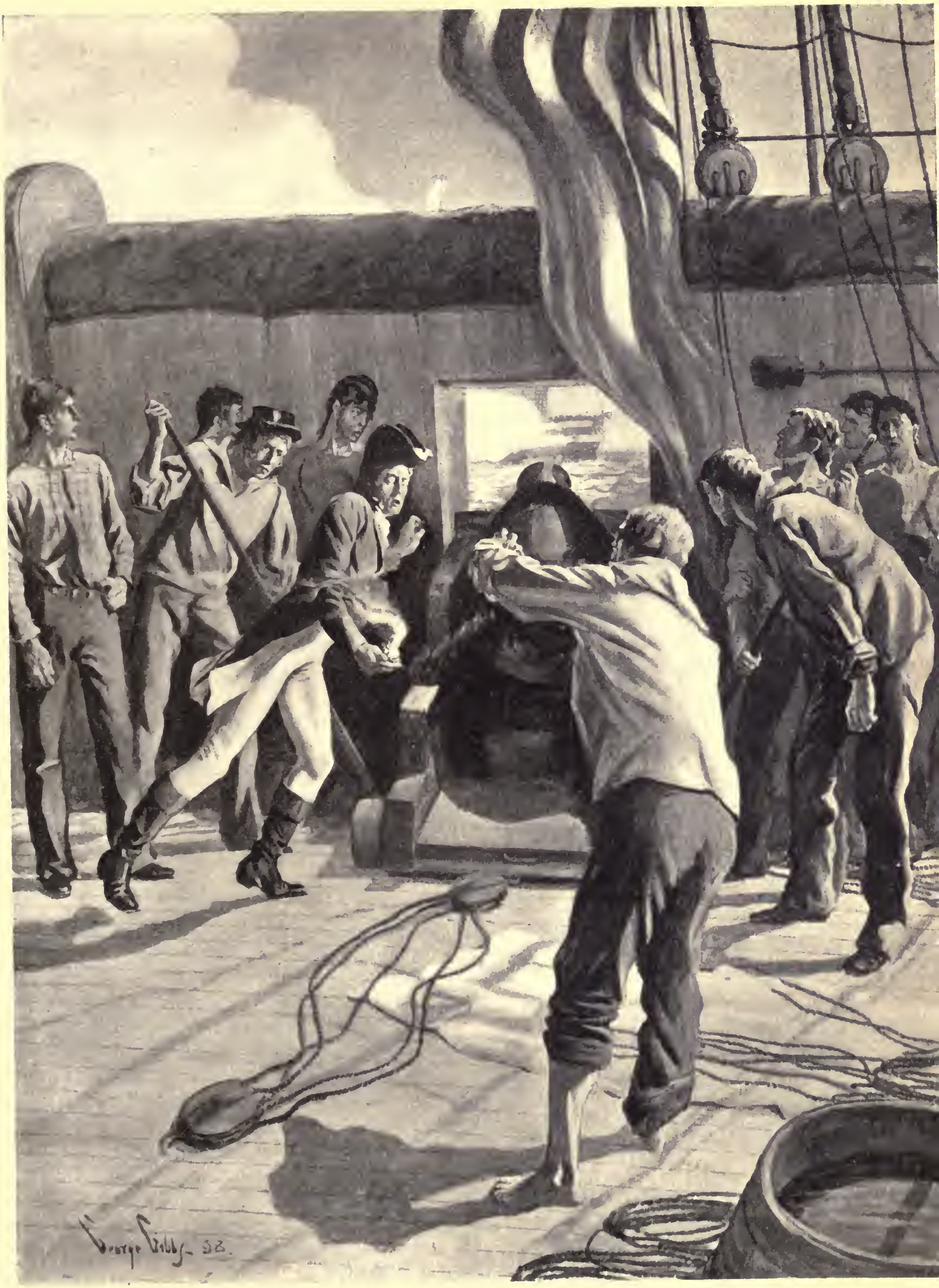
The "Shannon" evidently understood the purport of the signal; for she quickly hove to, and troops of agile jackies clambered up her rigging, and began to take in sail. The "Chesapeake" followed suit, and was soon under only top-sails and jib. She then laid her course straight for the enemy.

A ship preparing for action in that day was a scene of hurry and confusion that cannot be equalled in this era of machinery and few guns. At the short, broken, rolling beat of the drums, calling the men to quarters, the hurried rush of hundreds of feet began, as the men came pouring from all parts of the ship to their posts. Some clambered aloft to their stations in the tops; others invaded the sanctity of the quarter-deck and captain's cabin, where several guns are always mounted. But the most stirring scene is on the long gun-deck where the men gradually fall into their places at the two long rows of great guns that peer through the open ports on either side. All are stripped to the waist; and at many a gun the fair skin of the American sailor gleams white by the side of some swarthy Spaniard, or still darker negro.



BEATING TO QUARTERS.

All quiet down on reaching their stations; and, five minutes after the drum-beats, no sound is heard, save perhaps the steps of the black boys,


George Gibbs 98.

THE ONLY SHOT OF THE "CHESAPEAKE"

taking rations of grog around, that the men may "splice the main brace" before going into the fight.

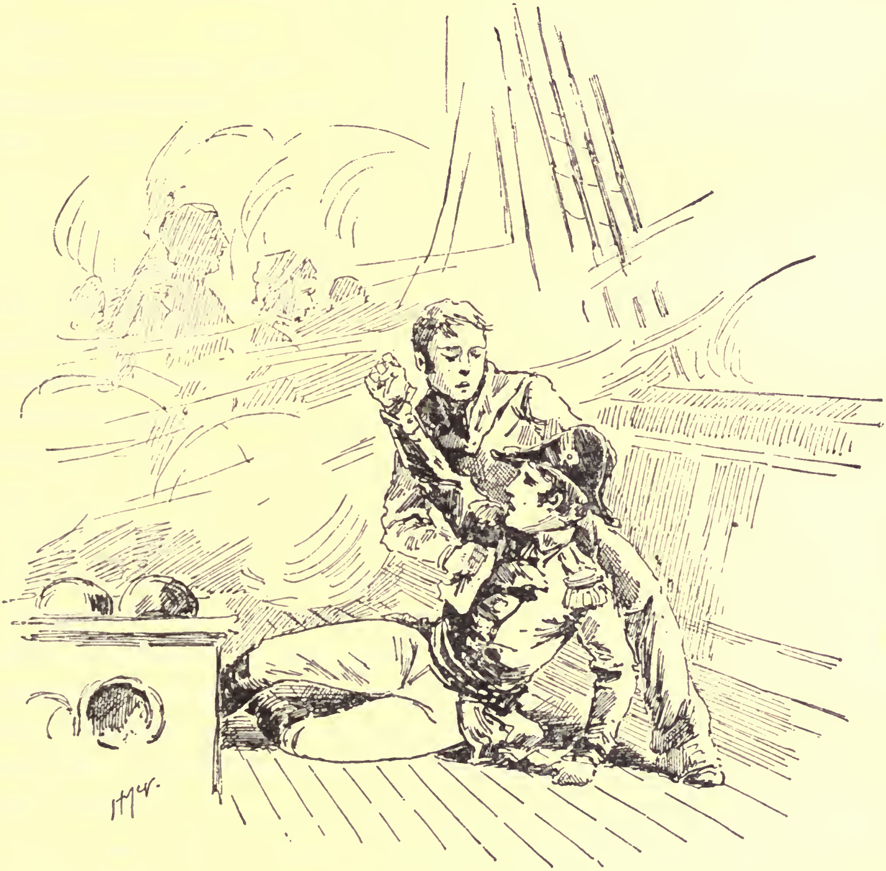
Thus silently did the "Chesapeake" bear down upon her adversary. There was no long-range firing; for the two commanders were veterans, whose chief desire was to settle the dispute yard-arm to yard-arm. Gradually the American ship ranged alongside the "Shannon," at a distance of half pistol-shot; and, as her fore-mast came in a line with the "Shannon's" mizzen-mast, the latter opened fire with her cabin-guns. For a moment the "Chesapeake" was silent, waiting for her guns to bear; then, with sulphuric flashes and a thunderous roar, she let fly her whole broadside. Then followed a duel with great guns. The two ships, lying side by side, dealt and received staggering blows. The spectators in small boats, who kept a safe distance, and the crowds of eager watchers on the far-off heights of Salem, saw through their spy-glasses the flash of the first broadsides, and the flying splinters that followed the course of the deadly shot. Then a heavy cloud of yellow smoke settled over the warring leviathans, and all further incidents of the battle were shut out from view. Only the top-masts of the ships, with the half-furled sails and the opposing ensigns flying, could be seen above the smoke.

Under this vaporous pall, the fighting was sharp and desperate. The first broadside of the "Shannon" so swept the decks of the American frigate, that, of one hundred and fifty men quartered on the upper deck, not fifty were upon their legs when the terrible rush of the shot was over. The sailors in the tops of the British frigate, looking down upon the decks of their enemy, could see nothing but a cloud of hammocks, splinters, and wreckage of all kinds, driven fiercely across the deck. Both men at the wheel fell dead, but their places were soon filled; while fresh gunners rushed down to work the guns that had been silenced by the enemy's fearful broadside. In a moment the "Chesapeake" responded with spirit, and for some time broadsides were exchanged with inconceivable rapidity. The men encouraged each other with cheers and friendly cries. They had named the guns of the frigate, and with each telling shot they cheered the iron-throated monster which had hurled the bolt. "Wilful Murder," "Spitfire," "Revenge," "Bull Dog," "Mad Anthony," "Defiance," "Raging Eagle," and "Viper" were some of the titles born by the great guns; and well the weapons bore out the names thus bestowed upon them. The gunnery of the Americans was good, their shot doing much damage to the enemy's rigging. But the effect of the "Shannon's" broadsides was such that no men, however brave, could stand before them. They swept the decks, mowing down brave fellows by the score. Officers fell on every side. At a critical moment the two ships fouled, exposing the "Chesapeake" to a raking broadside, which beat in her stern-ports, and drove the gunners from the after-port. At this moment, Lawrence was wounded in the leg, but remained at his post and ordered that the boarders be called up. Unhappily a negro bugler had been detailed for the duty usually performed by drummers; and, at this important moment, he could not be found. Midshipmen and lieutenants ran about the ship, striving to call up the boarders by word of mouth. In the confusion, the bugler was found skulking under the stem of the launch, and so paralyzed by fear that he could only give a feeble blast upon his instrument. In the din and confusion of battle, the oral orders of the officers only perplexed the men; and the moment for boarding was lost. At that very moment, the turning-point of the conflict, Capt. Lawrence was struck by a musket-ball, and fell mortally wounded to the deck. His officers rushed to his side, and, raising him gently, were carrying him below, when in a firm voice he cried, —

"Tell the men to fire faster, and not give up the ship. Fight her till she sinks."

With these words on his lips, he was carried to the ward-room.

At this moment, the upper deck was left without an officer above the rank of midshipman. The men, seeing their captain carried below, fell into a panic, which was increased by the explosion of an arm-chest, into which a hand-grenade, hurled by a sailor lying out on the yard-arm of the "Shannon," had fallen. Seeing that the fire of the Americans had slackened, Capt. Broke left his quarter-deck, and, running hastily forward, gained a position on the bow of his ship from which he could look down upon the decks of the "Chesapeake." His practised eye quickly perceived the confusion on the deck of the American frigate; and he instantly ordered that the ships be lashed together, and the boarders called up. An old quartermaster, a veteran in the British navy, set about lashing the ships together, and accomplished his task, although his right arm was actually hacked off by the cutlass of an American sailor. The boarders were slow in coming up, and but twenty men fol lowed Broke as he climbed to the deck of the "Chesapeake." Broke led his men straight for the quarter-deck of the frigate. The Americans offered but little resistance. Not an officer was in sight to guide the men, and the newly enlisted sailors and foreigners fled like sheep before the advance of the boarders.



ON BOARD THE "CHESAPEAKE."

The British reached the quarter-deck with hardly the loss of a man. Here stood Mr. Livermore, the chaplain of the "Chesapeake," who had cruised long with Lawrence, and bitterly mourned the captain's fate. Determined to avenge the fallen captain, he fired a pistol at Broke's head, but missed him. Broke sprang forward, and dealt a mighty stroke of his keen cutlass at the chaplain's head, who saved himself by taking the blow on his arm. While the boarders were thus traversing the upper deck, the sailors in the tops of the "Chesapeake" were keeping up a well-directed fire, before which many of the Englishmen fell. But this resistance was not of long duration; for one of the "Shannon's" long nines, loaded with grape, swept clean the "Chesapeake's" tops. With this, the British were in full control of the upper deck.

Up to this time, the Americans on the gun-deck had known nothing of the events occurring on the deck above them. When the news of the British assault spread, Lieut. Budd called upon the men to follow him, and drive the boarders back to their own ship. A number of the marines (who behaved splendidly throughout the fight) and some twenty veteran sailors were all that responded to the call. Broke had in the mean time summoned the marines of the "Shannon" to his aid; and the British, led by their dashing commander, were pouring in a dense column down the companion-ways to the gun-deck. Budd and his handful of followers attacked them fiercely; and, by the very desperation of the onset, the British were forced back a few paces. Broke threw himself upon the Americans. With his cutlass he cut down the first man who attacked him, and bore down upon the others, dealing deadly blows right and left. His followers came close behind him. The Americans fell on every side, and began to retreat before the overwhelming force of their foes. Up from the wardroom came Lieut. Ludlow, already suffering from two dangerous wounds. He placed himself beside the younger officer, and the two strove in every way to encourage their men But Ludlow soon fell, with a gaping wound across his forehead. Budd was cut down, and fell through the hatchway to the deck beneath. The sailors, seeing both officers fall, gave way in confusion; and the ship was in the hands of the British. A few marines kept up a fire through the hatchway, but soon were silenced.

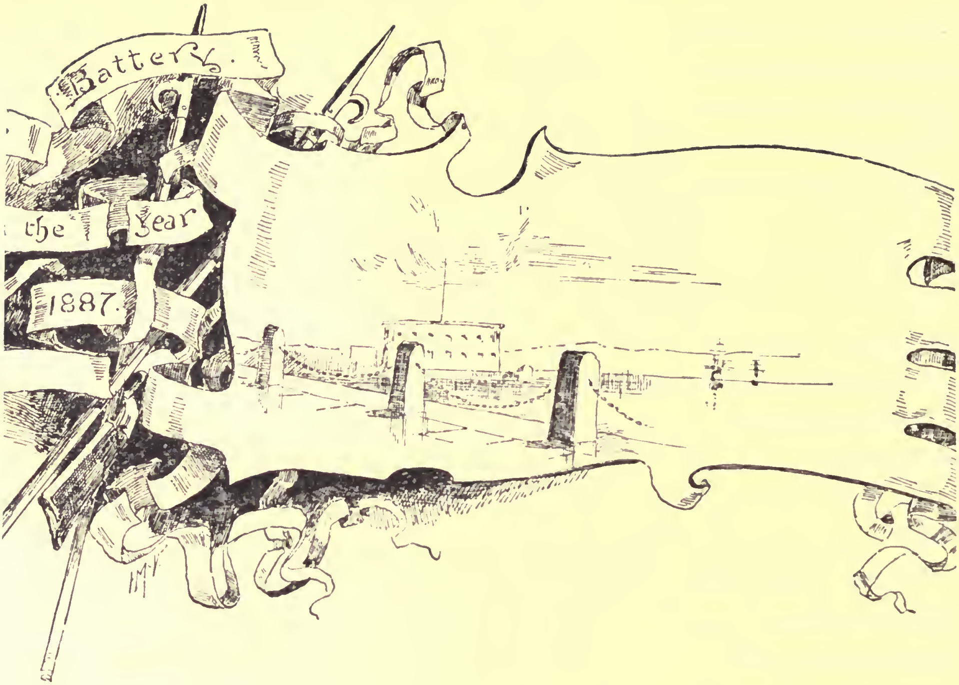
An English officer, Lieut. Watts, ran to the halliards to haul down the American flag. But it would seem that the good genius which had watched over that starry banner throughout the war was loath to see it disgraced; for the officer had hardly finished his work, when a grape-shot from his own ship struck him, and he fell dead.

The noise of the battle had by this time died away, and the fresh breezes soon carried off the smoke that enveloped the combatants. It was an awful scene thus exposed to view. On the "Chesapeake" were sixty-one killed, and eighty-five wounded men. On the "Shannon" were thirty-three dead, and fifty wounded. On a cot in the wardroom lay Capt. Lawrence, his mortal wound having mercifully rendered him unconscious, so that he knew nothing of the loss of his ship. Broke had been made delirious by the fevered throbbing of the wound he had so long neglected. Everywhere were evidences of carnage and desolation.

Little time was lost in getting the ships in order after the surrender. The noise of the hammer and saw was heard in every quarter. The wounded were taken to the sick-bay, and the bodies of the dead were committed to the ocean. Floods of water and the heavy holystones took from the decks the stains of blood. The galley cooks marched up and down the decks, sprinkling hot vinegar with a lavish hand. The British prize-crew took possession of the captured ship, and in a few hours the captor and captive were well on their way toward Halifax.

They reached port on the 7th of June; and the sight of the "Shannon," followed by the "Chesapeake" with the British ensign flying proudly over the stars and stripes, stirred the little city to the utmost enthusiasm. As the two ships pursued their stately course up the harbor, the British men-of-war on all sides manned their yards, and fired salutes in honor of the victory. The thunders of the cannon brought the town's-people to the water-side, and their cheers rang out lustily to welcome their conquering countrymen to port.

Capt. Lawrence had died the day before; and his body, wrapped in an American flag, lay on the quarter-deck of his frigate. Three days later, his body, with that of his gallant lieutenant Ludlow, was laid to rest with imposing naval honors, in the churchyard of Halifax. But his country, honoring him even in the day of his defeat, was not content that his body should lie in the soil of an enemy's country. Two months after the battle, an American vessel, the "Henry" of Salem, entered the harbor of Halifax, under cover of a flag of truce, and took on board the bodies of Lawrence and Ludlow. They were conveyed first to Salem and later to New York, where they now lie under a massive monument of sandstone, in a corner of Trinity churchyard. A few feet away, the ceaseless tide of human life rolls on its course up and down Broadway; few of the busy men and women pausing to remember that in the ancient churchyard lies the body of the man whose dying words, "Don't give up the ship," were for years the watchword and motto of the United States navy.



CHAPTER X.

CRUISE OF THE "ESSEX." — A RICH PRIZE. — THE MYSTERIOUS LETTER. — CAPE HORN ROUNDED. — CAPTURE OF A PERUVIAN PRIVATEER. — AMONG THE BRITISH WHALERS. — PORTER IN COMMAND OF A SQUADRON. — A BOY COMMANDER. — THE SQUADRON LAYS UP AT NOOKAHEEVAH.

WHILE the events related in the two preceding chapters were occurring along the American coast, a few gallant vessels were upholding the honor of the stars and stripes in far distant lands. To cruise in waters frequented by an enemy's merchantmen, and capture, burn, sink, and destroy, is always a legitimate occupation for the navy of a belligerent nation. Yet the nation suffering at the hands of the cruisers invariably raises the cry of "wanton vandalism and cruelty," and brands the officers to whom falls so unpleasant a duty with the name of pirates. Such was the outcry raised against Paul Jones in the Revolutionary war; so it was the British described the brilliant service of the little brig "Argus" in 1813; and so the people of the North regarded the career of the "Alabama" and other Confederate cruisers in the great war for the Union. But perhaps no ship had ever a more adventurous career, or wrought more damage to the enemy's commerce, than the United States frigate "Essex," under the command of the able officer David Porter.

Of the circumstances which led to the famous cruise of the "Essex," some account has already been given. With a full crew, and stores enough to enable her to keep the sea for some months, the ship set sail from the Delaware in the autumn of 1812, and headed to the southward with the intention of joining the "Constitution" and "Hornet" at some point in the tropics. Her first point of call was at Porto Praya, a harbor in the Cape Verd Islands. To the captain's disappointment, he could learn nothing of Bainbridge at this place; and he soon departed, after scrupulously exchanging salutes with a rickety little fort, over which floated the flag of Portugal. Continuing her southward way, the "Essex" crossed the equator, on which occasion the jolly tars enjoyed the usual ceremonies attendant upon crossing the line. Father Neptune and his faithful spouse, with their attendant suite, came aboard and superintended the operation of shaving and dowsing the green hands, whose voyages had never called them before into the Southern seas. Capt. Porter looked upon the frolic indulgently. He was well known as a captain who never unnecessarily repressed the light-heartedness of his crew. Two hours daily were set aside during which the crew were free to amuse themselves in any reasonable way. At four o'clock every afternoon, the shrill piping of the boatswain's whistle rang through the ship, followed by the cry, "D'ye hear there, fore and aft? All hands skylark!" No order ever brought a quicker response, and in a minute the decks became a perfect pandemonium. The sailors rushed here and there, clad in all sorts of clothes; boxed, fenced, wrestled; ran short foot-races; played at leap-frog, and generally comported themselves like children at play. Fights were of common occurrence; and the two combatants soon became the centre of an interested ring of spectators, who cheered on their favorites with loud cries of "Go it, Bill. Now, Jack, lively with yer left." But a sailor has no better friend to-day than the man he fought yesterday; and the fights, like the play, only kept the crew in good spirits and contentment.

The day after crossing the equator, the "Essex" sighted a sail and gave chase. Towards evening the frigate had gained greatly upon the stranger, and Porter displayed all the British signals which he had in his possession. The chase made no response, but set a British ensign. By nine o'clock, the "Essex" was within musket-shot, and could easily have blown the fugitive out of water; but this Porter was loath to do, as he desired to take the brig without doing her any injury. However, as she showed no signs of surrendering, he ordered the marines to give her a volley of musketry. One man on the chase was killed, and a number wounded, upon which her flag was immediately hauled down. She proved to be the British packet "Nocton" of ten guns. In her hold was found fifty-five thousand dollars in specie, which was at once taken on board the "Essex;" and the "Nocton" was sent to the United States under the charge of a prize-crew. Before she could make a port, she fell in with a British man-of-war, and was captured after a few hours' chase.

Two days after parting with the "Nocton," the "Essex" hove in sight of the Island of Fernando Noronha, off the coast of Brazil. For a time the frigate abandoned her warlike character, battened down her ports, housed her guns, hid her large crew between decks, and sailed into the little harbor looking like a large but peaceable British merchantman. An officer clad in plain clothes went ashore, and, meeting the governor, stated that the ship was the "Fanny" of London, bound for Rio Janeiro. During the conversation, the governor remarked that His British Majesty's ships, the "Acosta" forty-four, and the "Morgiana" twenty, had but recently sailed from the port, and had left a letter for Sir James Yeo, requesting that it be forwarded to England as soon as possible. With this news, the lieutenant returned to the ship. On hearing his report, Porter at once surmised that the letter might have been left for him by Commodore Bainbridge; and he at once sent the officer back, bearing the message that the "Fanny" was soon going to London, and her captain would see the letter delivered to Sir James Yeo, in person. The unsuspecting governor accordingly delivered up the epistle, and it was soon in Porter's hands. The note read as follows:—

MY DEAR MEDITERRANEAN FRIEND,—Probably you may stop here. Don't attempt to water: it is attended with too many difficulties. I learned, before I left *England*, that you were bound to Brazil coast. If so, perhaps we may meet at St. Salvador or at Rio Janeiro. I should be happy to meet and converse on our old affairs of captivity. Recollect our secret in those times.

Your friend of His Majesty's ship "Acosta,"

KERR.

Sir JAMES YEO of His British Majesty's ship "Southampton."

Porter read and pondered over this perplexing letter. He felt sure that the letter was from Bainbridge; and in the allusion to St. Salvador and Rio Janeiro, he perceived the commodore's wish for a rendezvous at one of those places. But what could be the secret of the times of captivity? Suddenly a thought struck him. Might there not be something written in sympathetic ink? Hurriedly calling for a candle, he held the letter above its flame, and saw, under the influence of the heat, words and sentences appearing where before all was blank paper.

"I am bound off St. Salvador," it read; "thence off Cape Frio, where I intend to cruise until the 1st of January. Go off Cape Frio to the northward of Rio, and keep a lookout for me."

That afternoon the governor of the island, looking out toward the harbor, was surprised to see the "Fanny" standing out under a full spread of canvas. Porter had gained all the information that he wished, and was off in search of his consorts. This search he continued until the 20th of January, cruising up and down off the Brazilian coast, and taking one or two small prizes. In this unprofitable service the ship's stores were being rapidly consumed. Among other things, the supply of rum began to run short; and in connection with this occurred a curious incident, that well illustrates the character of sailors. The daily rations of bread were reduced one-half, and the rations of salt meat one-third, without a word of remonstrance from the patient crew. Next the discovery was made that the rum was giving out, and a proportional reduction in the rations of grog was duly ordered. The jackies put in a vigorous and immediate protest. They were prepared, they said, to go without grog, should the supply of rum be unhappily exhausted; but so long as any of the precious fluid remained, their rations of grog should not be curtailed. But to this Porter would not accede, fearing that, should the men be altogether deprived of their grog, the health of the crew might suffer. Accordingly, when the crew were piped to "splice the main brace" the next day, they were told that half rations only would be issued; and, if the grog was not taken up in fifteen minutes, the tub would be overturned, and the rum spilled into the sea. So dire a threat was too much for the rebellious seamen: they sprang into line, with their tin cups, and drew their curtailed rations without more ado.

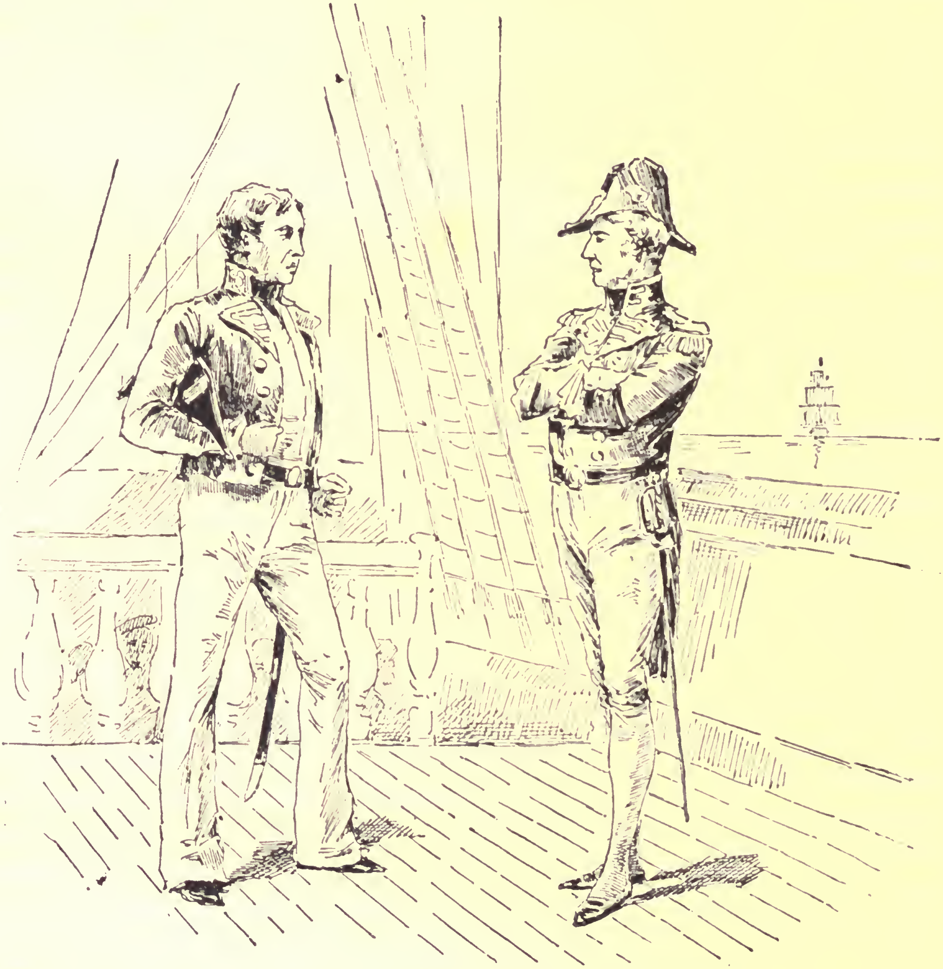
Some days after this occurrence, the "Essex" overhauled a Portuguese vessel, from the captain of which Porter learned that an American frigate had shortly before fought and sunk an English frigate off the coast of Brazil; also, that it was rumored that an American corvette of twenty-two guns had been brought into Rio, a prize to a British seventy-four. This intelligence placed Capt. Porter in some perplexity. He felt convinced that the successful American frigate was the "Constitution;" a conjecture in which he was correct, for the news referred to the celebrated action of that ship with the "Java." The captured American corvette, he concluded, must be the "Hornet;" but herein the captain was wrong, for the "Hornet" was at that moment blockading the "Bonne Citoyenne."

Porter now found it necessary to decide upon a course of action. The news which he had received made it appear most improbable that he would fall in with either of the United States vessels for which he was seeking. He was far from home, cruising in seas much frequented by British men-of-war. There were no naval stations or outposts belonging to the United States, into which he could put for protection or repairs; for then, as now, the nation ignored the necessity of such supply-stations. To return home was peculiarly distasteful to the captain, who had set sail with the intention of undertaking a long cruise. In this dilemma, he wasted but little time in thought. By rounding Cape Horn, he would carry the "Essex" into the Pacific Ocean, where British merchantmen abounded and men-of-war were few. It was an adventurous and a perilous expedition to undertake; but Porter, having decided upon it, wasted no time in getting under way. That very night he took his ship out of the snug harbor of St. Catherine's, and started upon his long voyage around the Horn.

A winter voyage around Cape Horn, even in the stoutest of ships, is an undertaking to be dreaded by the most courageous seamen. The "Essex" seemed to meet with more than her share of stormy weather. From the night when she set sail from St. Catherine's, until she dropped anchor in a harbor of the Island of Mocha, almost every day witnessed a struggle for supremacy between the raging ocean on the one side, and skilful seamanship and nautical science on the other. Capt. Porter, however, proved himself ready for every emergency. No peril of the deep was unforeseen, no ounce of prevention unprovided. The safety of his ship, and the health of his men, were ever in his thoughts; and accordingly, when the "Essex" rounded into the Pacific Ocean, both men and ship were in condition to give their best service to the enterprise in which they were embarked.

After rounding Cape Horn, the "Essex" made her way northward along the desolate coast of Chili, until she reached the Island of Mocha. Here she anchored for a day, giving the crew a much needed run on shore, which they enjoyed with all the zest of schoolboys out for a day's holiday. The island afforded little in the way of fresh stores; but some pigs and horses were shot, and devoured with gusto by men who for over two months had not tasted fresh meat. From this point the frigate made for Valparaiso, and, after reconnoitring the port, put in for water and stores. The officers were received with much hospitality by the townspeople, and, after a few days' stay, were tendered a complimentary ball, — an entertainment into which the young officers entered with great glee. But, unhappily for their evening's pleasure, the dancing had hardly begun, when a midshipman appeared at the door of the hall, and announced that a large frigate was standing into the harbor. Deserting their fair partners, the people of the "Essex" hastened to their ship and were soon in readiness for the action; while the townspeople thronged the hills overlooking the sea, in the hopes of seeing a naval duel. But the frigate proved to be a Spaniard; and, of course, no action occurred.

The "Essex" remained several days at Valparaiso, and during her stay two or three American whalers put into the harbor. From the captains of these craft, Porter learned that the Peruvians were sending out privateers to prey upon American commerce, and that much damage had already been done by these marauders, who were no more than pirates, since no war existed between Peru and the United States. Porter determined to put an immediate stop to the operations of the Peruvian cruisers, and had not long to wait for an opportunity. A day or two after leaving Valparaiso, a sail was sighted in the offing, which was soon near enough to be made out a vessel-of-war, disguised as a whaler. Porter hung out the English ensign, and caused an American whaler, with which he had that morning fallen in, to hoist a British flag over the stars and stripes. At this sight, the stranger hoisted the Spanish flag, and threw a shot across the bow of the "Essex." Porter responded by a few shot that whizzed through the rigging just above the Spaniard's deck. The latter thereupon sent a boat to the "Essex;" and the officer who came aboard, thinking that he was on a British man-of-war, boasted of his ship's exploits among the American whalers. His vessel was the



THE PERUVIAN PRIVATEER.

Peruvian privateer "Nereyda" of fifteen guns, and she had captured two American whalers, whose crews were even then in the hold of the privateer. He admitted that Peru had no quarrel with the United States, and no reason for preying upon her commerce. The confession, so unsuspectingly made, gave Porter ample grounds for the capture of the offending vessel. Curtly informing his astounded visitor that he was on a United States man-of-war, Porter ordered the gunners to fire two shots close to the privateer. This was done, and the Peruvian quickly hauled down his colors. The American officers, on boarding the prize, found twenty-three American sailors, who had been robbed of all that they possessed, stripped of half their clothing, and thrown into the hold These unfortunate men were released and sent to the "Essex;" after which all the guns and ammunition of the privateer were thrown overboard, and the vessel ordered to return to Callao.

After this act of summary justice, the "Essex" continued in her northward course. She touched at Callao; but, much to the disappointment of all on board, there were no British vessels among the shipping at that port. Nor could the lookouts, for some days, discern from the masthead any craft other than the double-hulled rafts of logs, called catamarans, in which the natives along the Peruvian coast make long voyages. Weary of such continued ill-luck, Porter determined to make for the Galapagos Islands, where it was the custom of the British whaling-ships to rendezvous. But it seemed that ill-fortune was following close upon the "Essex;" for she sailed the waters about the Galapagos, and sent out boats to search small bays and lagoons, without finding a sign of a ship. Two weeks passed in this unproductive occupation, and Porter had determined to abandon the islands, when he was roused from his berth on the morning of April 29, 1813, by the welcome cry of "Sail, ho!"

All hands were soon on deck, and saw a large ship in the offing. All sail was clapped on the frigate; and she set out in hot pursuit, flying the British ensign as a ruse to disarm suspicion. As the chase wore on, two more sail were sighted; and Porter knew that he had fallen in with the long-sought whalers. He had no doubt of his ability to capture all three; for in those southern seas a dead calm falls over the ocean every noon, and in a calm the boats of the "Essex" could easily take possession of the whalers. By eight o'clock in the morning, the vessel first sighted was overhauled, and hove to in obedience to a signal from the frigate. She proved to be the "Montezuma," Capt. Baxter, with a cargo of fourteen hundred barrels of sperm-oil. Baxter visited Capt. Porter in his cabin, and sat there unsuspectingly, giving the supposed British captain information for his aid in capturing American ships. The worthy whaler little knew, as he chatted away, that his crew was being transferred to the frigate, and a prize-crew sent to take charge of the "Montezuma."

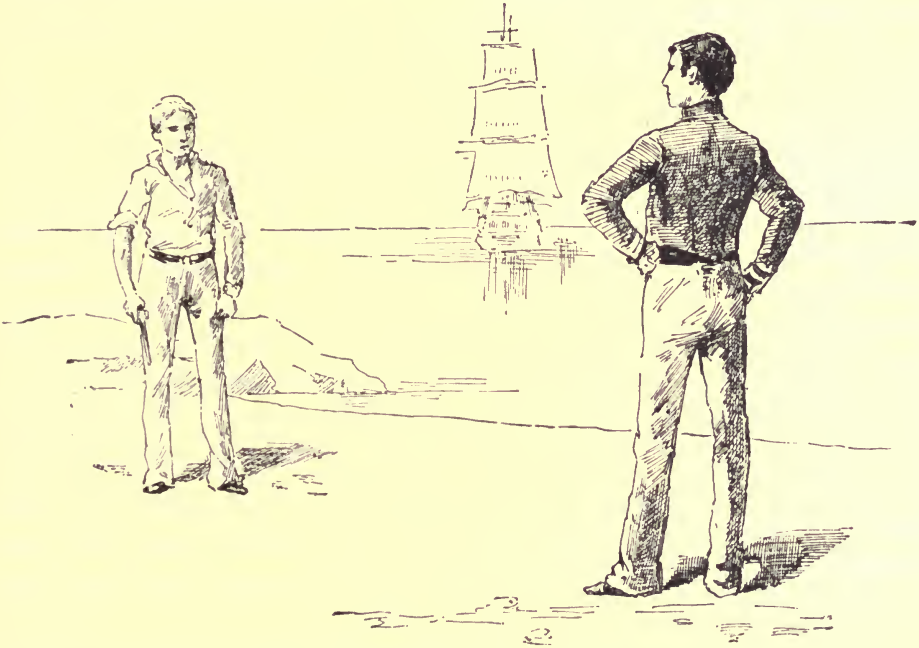
By noon the expected calm fell over the water; and the boats were ordered away to take possession of the two whalers, that lay motionless some eight miles from the "Essex." The distance was soon passed, and the two ships were ordered to surrender, which they quickly did, much astonished to find a United States man-of-war in that region. A breeze shortly after springing up, all the prizes bore down upon the frigate; and the gallant lads of the "Essex" had the pleasure of seeing themselves surrounded with captured property to the value of nearly half a million dollars. One of the vessels, the "Georgiana," was a good sailer, strongly built, and well fitted for a cruiser. Accordingly she was armed with sixteen guns and a number of swivels, and placed under the command of Lieut. Downes. With this addition to his force, and with the other two prizes following in his wake, Porter returned to the Galapagos Islands. The first sight of the far-off peaks of the desert islands rising above the water was hailed with cheers by the sailors, who saw in the Galapagos not a group of desolate and rocky islands, but a place where turtle was plenty, and shore liberty almost unlimited. Porter remained some days at the islands, urging the crew of the "Essex," as well as the prisoners, to spend much time ashore. Signs of the scurvy were evident among the men, and the captain well knew that in no way could the dread disease be kept away better than by constant exercise on the sands of the seashore. The sailors entered heartily into their captain's plans, and spent hours racing on the beach, swimming in the surf, and wandering over the uninhabited islands.

After a few days of this sort of life, the squadron put to sea again. The "Georgianna" now separated from the fleet, and started on an independent cruise, with orders for a rendezvous at certain specific times. The "Essex" continued to hover about the Galapagos, in the hopes of getting a few more whalers. She had not long to wait; for the whale ship "Atlantic" soon fell in her way, and was promptly snapped up. The captain of this ship was a Nantucket man, who had deserted the flag of his country, to cruise under what he thought to be the more powerful flag of Great Britain. Great was his disgust to find that by his treachery he had lost all that he desired to protect. While in chase of the "Atlantic," a second sail had been sighted; and to this the "Essex" now gave chase. On being overhauled, the stranger at first made some show of fighting; but a shot or two from the guns of the frigate convinced him of the folly of this course, and he surrendered at discretion. The vessel proved to be the whale ship letter-of-marque "Greenwich;" a stout ship, of excellent sailing qualities. She carried ten guns, and was in every way a valuable prize.

Porter had now been in the Pacific Ocean about three months. On the 24th of February, the "Essex," solitary defender of the flag of the United States in the Pacific, had turned her prow northward from Cape Horn, and embarked on her adventurous career in the most mighty of oceans. Now in May, Porter, as he trod the deck of his good ship, found himself master of a goodly squadron instead of one stanch frigate. The "Essex," of course, led the list, followed by the "Georgianna," sixteen guns, forty-two men; "Atlantic," six guns, twelve men; "Greenwich," ten guns, fourteen men; "Montezuma," two guns, ten men; "Policy," ten men. Of these the "Georgianna" had already received her armament and authority as a war-vessel; and the "Atlantic" showed such seaworthy qualities that Porter determined to utilize her in the same way. Accordingly he set sail for Tumbez, where he hoped to get rid of some of his prisoners, perhaps sell one or two of his prizes, and make the necessary changes in the "Atlantic." While on the way to Tumbez, a Spanish brig was overhauled. Her captain vastly edified Capt. Porter by informing him that the "Nereyda," a Peruvian privateer, had recently attacked a huge American frigate, and inflicted great damage upon the Yankee. But the frigate proving too powerful, the privateer had been forced to fly, and hastened her flight by throwing overboard all her guns and ammunition.

On the 19th of June, the "Essex" with her satellites cast anchor in the harbor of Tumbez. The first view of the town satisfied Porter that his hopes of selling his prizes there were without avail. A more squalid, dilapidated little seaside village, it would be hard to find. Hardly had the ships cast anchor, when the governor came off in a boat to pay a formal visit. Though clothed in rags, he had all the dignity of a Spanish hidalgo, and strutted about the quarter-deck with most laughable self-importance. Notwithstanding his high official station, this worthy permitted himself to be propitiated with a present of one hundred dollars; and he left the ship, promising all sorts of aid to the Americans. Nothing came of it all, however; and Porter failed to dispose of any of his prizes. While the "Essex" with her train of captives lay in the harbor at Tumbez, the "Georgianna" came into port, and was greeted with three cheers by the men of the frigate. Lieut. Downes reported that he had captured three British ships, carrying in all twenty-seven guns and seventy-five men. One of the prizes had been released on parole, and the other two were then with the "Georgianna." This addition to the number of vessels in the train of the "Essex" was somewhat of an annoyance to Capt. Porter, who saw clearly that so great a number of prizes would seriously interfere with his future movements against the enemy. He accordingly remained at Tumbez only long enough to convert the "Atlantic" into an armed cruiser under the name of the "Essex Junior," and then set sail, in the hopes of finding some port wherein he could sell his embarrassing prizes. His prisoners, save about seventy-five who enrolled themselves under the American flag, were paroled, and left at Tumbez; and again the little squadron put to sea. The "Essex Junior" was ordered to take the "Hector," "Catherine," "Policy," and "Montezuma" to Valparaiso, and there dispose of them, after which she was to meet the "Essex" at the Marquesas Islands. On her way to the rendezvous, the "Essex" stopped again at the Galapagos Islands, where she was lucky enough to find the British whaler "Seringapatam," known as the finest ship of the British whaling fleet. By her capture, the American whalers were rid of a dangerous enemy; for, though totally without authority from the British Crown, the captain of the "Seringapatam" had been waging a predatory warfare against such luckless Americans as fell in his path. Porter now armed this new prize with twenty-two guns, and considered her a valuable addition to his offensive force. She took the place of the "Georgianna," which vessel Porter sent back to the United States loaded with oil.

Among the embarrassments which the care of so many prizes brought upon the leader of the expedition was the difficulty of finding commanding officers for all the vessels. This difficulty was enhanced while the flotilla lay off the Galapagos Islands; for two officers, falling into a dispute, settled their quarrel, after the manner of the day, by a duel. In the contest one, a lieutenant, aged only twenty-one years, was killed, and now lies buried in the sands of the desolate and lonely island. After this occurrence, the need for commanding officers became so imperative that even the purser and chaplain of the "Essex" were pressed into the service. Midshipmen twelve or fourteen years old found themselves in command of ships. David Farragut was one of the boys thus suddenly promoted, and in his journal has left a description of his experience as a boy commander.



THE DUEL AT THE GALAPAGOS ISLANDS

"I was sent as prize-master to the 'Barclay,'" he writes. "This was an important event in my life; and, when it was decided that I was to take the ship to Valparaiso, I felt no little pride at finding myself in command at twelve years of age. This vessel had been recaptured from a Spanish *guarda costa.* The captain and his mate were on board; and I was to control the men sent from our frigate, while the captain was to navigate the vessel. Capt. Porter, having failed to dispose of the prizes as it was understood he intended, gave orders for the 'Essex

Junior' and all the prizes to start for Valparaiso. This arrangement caused great dissatisfaction on the part of the captain of the 'Barclay,' a violent-tempered old fellow; and, when the day arrived for our separation from the squadron, he was furious, and very plainly intimated to me that I would 'find myself off New Zealand in the morning,' to which I most decidedly demurred. We were lying still, while the other ships were fast disappearing from view; the 'Commodore' going north, and the 'Essex Junior' with her convoy steering to the south for Valparaiso.

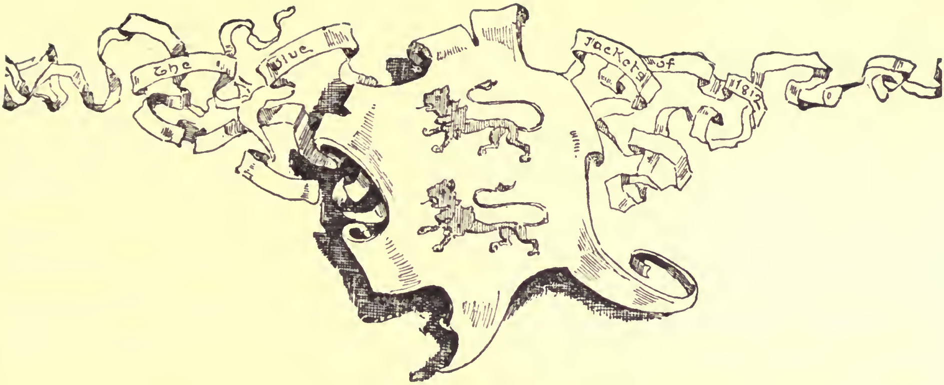
"I considered that my day of trial had arrived (for I was a little afraid of the old fellow, as every one else was). But the time had come for me at least to play the man: so I mustered up courage, and informed the captain that I desired the topsail filled away. He replied that he would shoot any man who dared to touch a rope without his orders; he 'would go his own course, and had no idea of trusting himself with a d—d nutshell;' and then he went below for his pistols. I called my right-hand man of the crew, and told him my situation; I also informed him that I wanted the main topsail filled. He answered with a clear 'Ay, ay, sir!' in a manner which was not to be misunderstood, and my confidence was perfectly restored. From that moment I became master of the vessel, and immediately gave all necessary orders for making sail, notifying the captain not to come on deck with his pistols unless he wished to go overboard; for I would really have had very little trouble in having such an order obeyed."

On the 30th of September, the squadron fell in with the "Essex Junior," which had come from Valparaiso. Lieut. Downes reported that he had disposed of the prizes satisfactorily, and also brought news that the British frigate "Phoebe," and the sloops-of-war "Raccoon" and "Cherub," had been ordered to cruise the Pacific in search of the audacious "Essex." More than this, he secured statistics regarding the fleet of British whalers in the Pacific, that proved that Porter had completely destroyed the industry, having left but one whaler uncaptured. There was then no immediate work for Porter to do; and he determined to proceed with his squadron to the Marquesas Islands, and there lay up, to make needed repairs and alterations.

The Marquesas are a desolate group of rocky islands lying in the Pacific Ocean, on the western outskirts of Oceanica. In formation they are volcanic, and rise in rugged mountain-peaks from the bosom of the great ocean. Sea-fowl of all sorts abound; but none of the lower mammals are to be found on the island, save swine which were introduced by Europeans. The people at the time of Porter's visit were simple savages, who had seldom seen the face of a white man; for at that early day voyagers were few in the far-off Pacific.

The island first visited by the "Essex" was known to the natives as Rooahooga. Here the frigate stopped for a few hours. During her stay, the water alongside was fairly alive with canoes and swimming natives. They were not allowed to come on board, but were immensely pleased by some fish-hooks and bits of iron let down to them from the decks of the frigate. Not to be outdone in generosity, the islanders threw up to the sailors cocoanuts, fruits, and fish. A boat-crew of jackies that went ashore was surrounded by a smiling, chattering throng of men, women, and children, who cried out incessantly, "*Taya, taya*" (friend, friend), and strove to bargain with them for fruits. They were a handsome, intelligent-looking people; tall, slender, and well formed, with handsome faces, and complexion little darker than that of a brunette. The men carried white fans, and wore bracelets of human hair, with necklaces of whales' teeth and shells about their necks, — their sole articles of clothing. Both men and women were tattoed; though the women seemed to content themselves with bands about the neck and arms, while the men were elaborately decorated from head to foot. Though some carried clubs and lances, they showed no signs of hostility, but bore themselves with that simple air of hospitality and unconscious innocence common to all savage peoples of tropical regions, uncorrupted by association with civilized white men.

Porter remained but a short time at this island, as its shallow bays afforded no safe anchorage for the vessels. But, charmed as he was with the friendly simplicity of the natives, he determined to remain some time in the vicinity, provided safe anchorage could be found. This essential was soon discovered at Nookaheevah, where the ships cast anchor in a fine harbor, which Porter straightway dubbed Massachusetts Bay. Hardly had the ship anchored, when a canoe containing three white men came alongside, and was ordered away by the captain, who thought them deserters from some vessel. The canoe then returned to the shore, and the three whites were joined by a vast assemblage of armed natives. Porter now began to fear lest he had offended the natives, and proceeded at once to the beach, with four boats well armed and manned. But, by the time the boats' prows grated upon the white sand, every native had disappeared ; and the sole figure visible was that of a young man, who advanced, and, giving a formal naval salute, announced himself as Midshipman John M. Maury, U.S.N. Porter was greatly surprised to find a midshipman in so strange a place ; but the latter explained it by stating that he was on furlough, and had been left there by a merchant-vessel, which was to call for him. She had never returned, however, and he now hailed the "Essex" as an opportunity for escape. A second white man, who then put in an appearance, naked and tattooed like an Indian, proved to be an Englishman who had been on the island for years, and who, by his knowledge of the language and character of the natives, proved of great assistance to the Americans, during the long stay upon which Capt. Porter had determined.

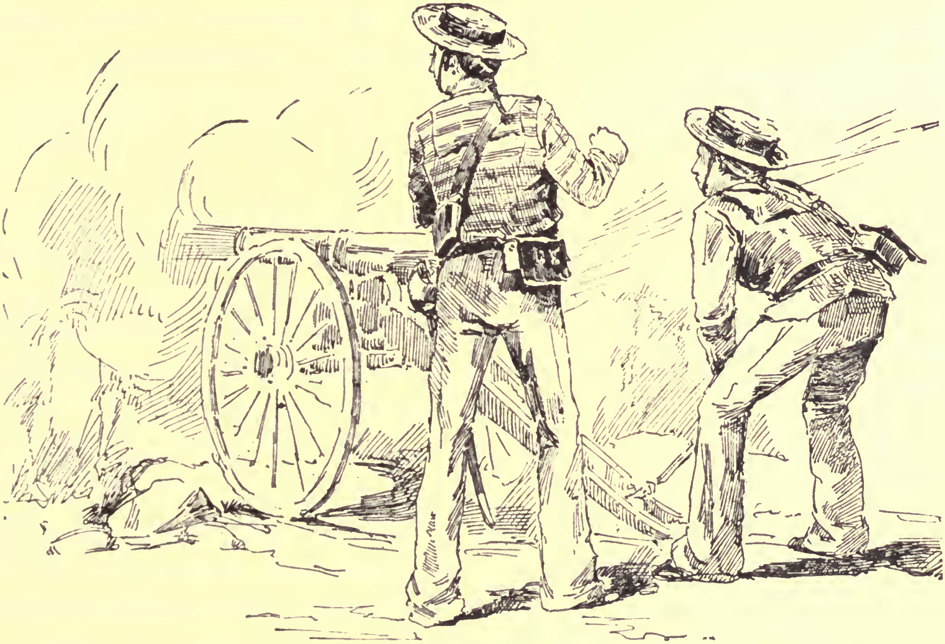


CHAPTER XI.

WAR WITH THE SAVAGES. — THE CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE TYPEES. — DEPARTURE FROM NOOKAHEEVAH. — THE "ESSEX" ANCHORS AT VALPARAISO. — ARRIVAL OF THE "PHŒBE" AND "CHERUB." — THEY CAPTURE THE "ESSEX." — PORTER'S ENCOUNTER WITH THE "SATURN." — THE MUTINY AT NOOKAHEEVAH.

IT was now the last of October, 1813. Capt. Porter saw that the work he desired done upon the ships under his charge would occupy about six weeks, and he at once set about forming such relations of peace and amity with the natives as should enable him to procure the necessary supplies and prosecute his work unmolested. Much to his dismay, he had hardly begun his diplomatic palaver with the chiefs, when he learned that to keep one tribe friendly he must fight its battles against all other tribes on the island. The natives of Nookaheevah were then divided into a large number of tribal organizations. With three of these the Americans were brought into contact, — the Happahs, the Taeehs, and the Typees. The Taeehs lived in the fertile valley about the bay in which the American squadron was anchored. With these people Porter treated first, and made his appearance in their village in great state, being accompanied by the band, the marines, and several boats' crews of jackies. He was hospitably received by the natives, who crowded about to listen to the band, and wonder at the military precision of the marines, whom they regarded as supernatural beings.

Gattanewa, the chief, expressed his abounding love for the captain, and exchanged names with him, after the custom of the people; but ended by saying that the lawless Happahs were at war with the Taeehs, and the Americans, to gain the friendship of the latter tribe, must make common cause with them against their enemies. To this Porter demurred, but the wily chief thereupon brought forward a most conclusive argument. He said that the Happahs had cursed his mother's bones; and that, as he and Porter had exchanged names, that estimable woman was the captain's mother also, and the insult to her memory should be avenged It is probable that even this argument might have proved unavailing, had not the Happahs the next night descended upon the valley, and, having burned two hundred bread-fruit trees, departed, leaving word that the Americans were cowards, and dared not follow them into their mountain fastnesses. Porter saw that his food supplies were in danger from these vandals, and his knowledge of savage character convinced him that he could have no peace with any of the natives until the insolence of this tribe was punished. Accordingly he notified the Taeehs, that, if they would carry a gun to the top of one of the mountain peaks, he would send a party against the Happahs. The Taeehs eagerly agreed; and, after seeing the gun fired once or twice (a sight that set them fondling and kissing it, to show their reverence for so powerful a weapon), they set off up the steep mountain sides, tugging the gun after them. Lieut. Downes led the American forces. They had hardly reached the mountain tops, when the fighting began. The Happahs were armed with spears, and with slings, from which they threw heavy stones with terrific velocity. They seemed to know no fear, and stood gallantly before the advancing Americans, fairly darkening the air with clouds of stones and spears. The Americans, though few in number, — forty, opposed to nearly four thousand savages, — pressed forward, suffering but little from the weapons of their foes. From the deck of his frigate in the bay, Porter could see the steady advances of his forces, as they drove the Happahs from peak to peak. Before the Americans a huge native strode along, waving wildly the American flag. The howitzer came in the rear, and was every now and then discharged, to drive the foe from some formidable stronghold. So ignorant of fire-arms were the enemy, that they had no idea of their power, often fighting until the muzzle of a musket was laid to their temples before the discharge. But before nightfall this warlike spirit was broken, and the victors returned to their ships, their native allies carrying five dead bodies slung on poles. Two only of the Americans were wounded. The next day Happah ambassadors came to sue for peace; and soon every tribe on the island joined the alliance, save the Typees, and a distant tribe that proudly bore the unpronounceable name of Hatecaaheottwohos. For two or three weeks peace reigned undisturbed. Work was pushed on the vessels. The rats with which the "Essex" was infested were smoked out, an operation that necessitated the division of the crew between the shore and the other vessels. Porter himself, with his officers, took up his quarters in a tent pitched on the shore. Under some circumstances, such a change would have been rather pleasant than otherwise; but the rainy season had now come on, and the tent was little protection against the storms. Noticing this, the natives volunteered to put up such buildings as the captain desired, and proceeded to do so in a most expeditious manner. At early dawn four



FIRING THE HOWITZER.

thousand men set about the work, and by night had completed a walled village, containing a dwelling-house for the captain, another for his officers, a cooper's shop, hospital, bake-house, guard-house, and a shed for the sentinel to walk under. For their services the men received old nails, bits of iron hoop, and other metal scraps, with which they were highly delighted. The Americans were then living on the terms of the most perfect friendship with the natives. Many of the jackies had been taken into the families of the islanders, and all had formed most tender attachment for the beautiful island women; who, in their turn, were devoted to the "Malleekees," who were such mighty men of war, and brought them such pretty presents of beads and whales' teeth. The Americans entered into the celebrations and festivities of the islanders, watched their dances, joined their fishing expeditions, and soon were on the friendliest footing with their dusky hosts.

But so pleasant and peaceful an existence was not destined to continue long. The Typees, who inhabited the interior of the island, were beginning to stir up strife against the Americans; and Porter saw that their insolence must be crushed, or the whole native population would unite in war against him. But to begin a war with the Typees was far from Porter's wish. The way to their country lay over rugged precipices and through almost impenetrable jungles. The light-footed natives could easily enough scale the peaks, or thread the forests; but to Porter's sailors it would be an exhausting undertaking. No artillery could be taken into the field, and the immense number of natives that might be arrayed against the sailors made the success of the expedition very uncertain. Porter, therefore, determined to try to adjust the difficulty amicably, and with this purpose sent an ambassador to the Typees, proposing a peaceful alliance. The reply of the natives is an amusing example of the ignorant vainglory of savage tribes, unacquainted with the power of civilized peoples. The Typees saw no reason to desire the friendship of the Americans. They had always got along very well without it. They had no intention of sending hogs or fruit to sell to the Americans. If the Americans wanted supplies, let them come and take them. The Americans were cowards, white lizards, and mere dirt. The sailors were weaklings, who could not climb the Nookaheevan hills without aid from the natives. This, and much more of the same sort, was the answer of the Typees to Porter's friendly overtures.

This left no course open to the Americans save to chastise the insolent barbarians. The departure of the expedition was, however, delayed until a fort could be built for the protection of the American village. This work, a sand-bag battery, calculated to mount sixteen guns, was completed on the 14th of November, and preparations for the expedition were then begun. And, indeed, it was time that the Americans showed that they were not to be insulted with impunity. Already the Taeehs and Happahs were beginning to wonder at the delay, and rumors spread about the village that the whites were really the cowards for which the Typees took them. One man, a chief among the Happahs, was rash enough to call Porter a coward to his face; whereat the choleric captain seized a gun, and, rushing for the offender, soon brought him to his knees, the muzzle of the weapon against his head, begging for mercy. That man was ever after Porter's most able ally among the natives.

The preparations for war with the Typees were completed, and the expedition was about to set out, when a new difficulty arose, this time among the white men. First, a plot was discovered among the British prisoners for the recapture of the "Essex Junior." Their plan was to get the crew drunk, by means of drugged rum, and then rise, seize the vessel, and make off while the American forces were absent on the Typee expedition. This plot, being discovered, was easily defeated; and the leaders were put in irons. Then Porter discovered that disaffection had spread among his crew, which, for a time, threatened serious consequences. But this danger was averted by the captain's manly actions and words, which brought the jackies to his side as one man.

On the 28th of November the long-deferred expedition against the Typees left the snug quarters on the shore of Massachusetts Bay. The expedition went by sea, skirting the shore of the island, until a suitable landing-place near the territory of the hostile tribe was reached. The "Essex Junior" led the way, followed by five boats full of men, and ten war-canoes filled with natives, who kept up an unearthly din with discordant conches. When the forces landed, the friendly natives were seen to number at least five thousand men; while of the Americans, thirty-five, under the command of Capt. Porter, were considered enough for the work in hand. From the time the fighting began, the friendly natives kept carefully in the rear, and seemed to be only waiting to aid the victors, whether they should be Americans or Typees.

Capt. Porter and his followers, upon landing, sat down upon the beach for breakfast; but their repast was rudely disturbed by a shower of stones from an ambuscade of Typees in the edge of the wood. Stopping but a moment to finish their food, the jackies picked up their cutlasses and muskets, and started for the enemy. They were soon in the shady recesses of the tropical forest, but not a Typee was to be seen. That the enemy was there, however, was amply attested by the hail of stones that fell among the invaders, and the snapping of slings that could be heard on all sides. This was a kind of fighting to which the sailors were not accustomed; and for a moment they wavered, but were cheered on by their brave leader, and, pushing through the woods, came to a clearing on the banks of a narrow river. But here a sad disaster befell them in the loss of Lieut. Downes, whose ankle was broken by a stone. He was sent back to the ship, with an escort of five men; and the party, thus reduced to twenty-nine, forded the river, and scaled its high bank, cheering lustily, under a heavy fire from the Typees, who made a dogged stand on the farther shore. By this time, the last of their savage allies had disappeared.

The advance of the Americans was now checked by a jungle of such rank underbrush that the cutlasses of the men made no impression upon it; and they were forced to crawl forward on their hands and knees, under a constant fire from the enemy. From this maze, they burst out upon a clearing, and, looking about them, saw no sign of their savage foes, who had suddenly vanished. The solution of this mystery was soon discovered. After marching a few rods totally unmolested, a sudden turn in the path brought the Americans in sight of a formidable stone fortress, perched on a hill commanding the road, and flanked on either side by dense jungles. The wall of the fortress was of stone, seven feet high; and from it, and from the thickets on either side, came such demoniac yells, and such showers of stones, as convinced the Americans that they were in front of the Typee stronghold. For a time the invaders seemed in danger of annihilation. They were totally unprotected, and flanked by concealed foes, whose missiles were plunging down upon them with deadly effect. Some few secured places behind trees, and began a musketry fire; but the alarming cry soon arose that the ammunition was exhausted. Five men were immediately despatched to the beach for more cartridges, while the few remaining determined to hold their position at any cost. But to this determination they were unable to adhere. Had the Typees charged, the whole American force would have been swept away like driftwood before a springtime flood. But the savages neglected their opportunity; and the Americans first gained the protection of the bushes, then fell back across the river, and so to the beach.

Here a council of war was held. They had been beaten back by savages; enormously outnumbered, to be sure, but still opposed by undisciplined warriors armed with rude weapons. The stain of that defeat must be washed out by a victory. Upon one point, all were agreed. The Happahs had played them false by leading them over the most dangerous roads, and into ambuscades of the enemy. To such treacherous guides, they would not again trust themselves. Before he again led his men to battle, Porter wished to try diplomacy. Although he knew that he had been beaten in the engagement, it would never do to confess defeat before so many savages (for the Taeehs and Happahs were now swarming about him, discussing the fight). Accordingly a messenger was sent to tell the Typees that a handful of white men had driven them into their fort, killing and wounding many. Now a large re-enforcement of white men was on the beach, ready to drive them from their valley, but that if they would sue for peace they might yet save their lives and their villages. At this the Typees laughed. "Tell Opotee," said they, "that we have plenty of men to spare; while his men are few. We have killed his chief warrior, and wounded many of his people. We are not afraid of his *bouhies* [muskets]: they often miss fire, and, when they wound, don't hurt much. If the Malleekees can drive us from our valley, why don't they come and do it? — not stay on the beach and talk."

When Porter received this letter, he knew that he must again take the field against the Typees, or his half-hearted allies would abandon him and join his foes, giving him endless trouble, and putting a stop to the refitting of the ships in Massachusetts Bay. He now understood the power of his foes, and accordingly chose two hundred men to go with him on the second expedition. He also determined to leave behind the friendly savages, whose friendship was a very doubtful quality. The forces left the beach that very night, and began their weary march up the mountain-side. It was bright moonlight; so that the narrow mountain paths, the fearful precipices, the tangled jungles, and the swamps and rivers were visible to the marching column. By midnight the Americans found themselves perched on the summit of a rocky peak overlooking the Typee valley, from which arose sounds of drum-beating, singing, and loud shouts of revelry. The guides who had led the American column said that the savages were rejoicing over their triumph, and were calling upon their gods to send rain and spoil the "Malleekees' *bouhies*." Porter knew the time was ripe for a surprise, and the men were eager to be led against the enemy; but the guides protested that no mortal men could descend the path leading to the Typee village, at night, so precipitous was the descent. The Americans were therefore forced to wait patiently until morning. Throwing themselves on the ground, the weary sailors were soon asleep, but were waked up in an hour by a heavy burst of rain. They saw the rain falling in sheets, and the sky banked with black clouds that gave little hope of a stoppage. From the valley below rose the triumphant yells of the Typees, who were convinced that their gods had sent the shower to spoil the white men's weapons. And, indeed, the floods poured down as though sent for that very service; so that at daybreak the Americans found that more than half their powder was spoiled. To make matters worse, the precipitous path leading down into the valley was so slippery that it would have been madness to attempt the descent. Accordingly Porter determined to retreat to the Happah village, and there wait for better weather. Before falling back, however, he ordered a volley fired, to show the savages that the fire-arms were not yet useless. The noise of the volley was the first intimation to the Typees that the Americans were so near them, and their village was at once thrown into the direst confusion. Cries of surprise mingled with the beating of drums, the blowing of horns, the shrieks of women and children, and the squealing of pigs being driven to places of safety. In the midst of the tumult the Americans retired to the Happah village, where they spent the remainder of that day and the following night.

The next morning dawned bright and cool after the rain; and the Americans sallied forth, determined to end this annoying affray in short order. They soon reached their former station on the cliffs, and, looking down upon the Typee territory, saw a beautiful valley, cut up by stone walls into highly cultivated farms, and dotted with picturesque villages.

But though their hearts may have been softened by the sight of so lovely a spot, so soon to be laid desolate, they were soon nerved to their work by a party of Typees, who were posted on the farther bank of a river that skirted the base of the cliff, and were calling out to the Americans, calling them cowards, and daring them to come down and fight. Porter gave the command; and the jackies were soon clambering down the cliffs, in the face of a rapid fire from their enemies. The bank of the river once gained, the Americans halted to rest for a few minutes, and then, fording the stream, pushed forward straight for the nearest village. The Typees hung upon the flank of the advancing column; now and then making fierce charges, but always beaten back with severe losses. The sailors suffered but little, and were soon in possession of the village, behind the walls of which the main body halted, while scouting parties were sent out to reconnoitre. After a short halt at this point, the invaders pushed forward to the next village, and so on up the valley, burning each village as soon as it was captured. Undismayed by their continued reverses, the Typees fought doggedly, scornfully refusing to listen to the peaceful overtures made by the American commander. After marching three or four miles, and fighting for every foot of the way, the Americans found themselves before an extensive village, which, from its size, and the strength of its fortifications, was evidently the Typee capital. Here the savages made a last determined stand, but to no avail. The Americans poured over the wall, and were soon in possession of the town. The beauty of the village, the regularity of its streets, and the air of comfort and civilization everywhere apparent, made it hard for Porter to give the fateful order that should commit all to the flames. But his duty was clear, and the order was given. Leaving the blazing capital behind them, the sailors retraced their steps to the ships, having completed the devastation of the valley that a day before was so peaceful, fertile, and lovely. The spirit of the Typees was thoroughly broken by this crushing blow; and for the next few days the ships were besieged by ambassadors from all the island tribes, begging for peace.

Feeling assured that he should have no further trouble with the natives, Porter now exerted all his energies to complete the repairs on the ships, that he might again take the sea. So rapidly did the work progress, that by the 9th of December the "Essex" and "Essex Junior" were refitted, and stocked with fresh provisions of hogs, cocoanuts, and bananas; the "New Zealander," loaded with oil from the other prizes, was ordered to proceed to New York; while the "Greenwich," "Seringapatam," and "Hammond" were to remain at the islands until the "Essex" should return for them. These arrangements being made, the war-ships made ready to depart.

But now arose a difficulty, ludicrous in its cause, but which threatened to be serious in its effects. The ships had been lying in harbor for about two months; and during that time the sailors, with unlimited shore liberty, had made such ties as bound them closely to the native people. The young girls of the islands, with their comely faces and fair complexions, had played sad havoc with the hearts of the gallant tars of the "Essex;" and deep was the grumbling among the sailors when they heard that the time had come for them to bid farewell to their sweethearts. No openly mutinous demonstration was made; but so old a commander could not overlook the fact that some disaffection existed among his crew, and a little investigation disclosed the trouble. There could be no half-way measures adopted in the case, and Porter at once gave orders that all further intercourse with the shore should cease. That very night three sailors slipped into the sea, and swam ashore to meet their sweethearts; but the wily captain had stationed a patrol upon the beach, and the three luckless Leanders were sent back to the ship in irons. All the next day the native girls lined the shore of the bay, and with pleading gestures besought the captain to let the sailors come ashore, but to no avail. Some fair maidens even swam off to the ship, but were gruffly ordered away by the officers. All this was very tantalizing to the men, who hung over the bulwarks, looking at the fair objects of their adoration. But one man only showed signs of rebellion against the captain's authority; and Porter, calling him out before the crew, rebuked him, and sent him ashore in a native canoe: while the rest of the jackies sprang into the rigging, set the canvas, and the ship soon left the island, with its sorrowing nymphs, far in her wake.

The two vessels turned their heads toward Valparaiso, and made the port after an uneventful voyage of fift-ysix days. The frigate entered the harbor at once, and cast anchor; while the "Essex Junior" was ordered to cruise about outside, keeping a close watch for the enemy's ships. The friendship of the people of the town seemed as great as during the first visit of the frigate to the port; and a series of entertainments was begun, that culminated in a grand ball upon the "Essex" on the night of the 7th of February, 1814. For that one night the officers of the "Essex Junior" were absolved from their weary duty of patrolling the sea at the mouth of the harbor. The vessel was anchored at a point that commanded a view of the ocean; and her officers, arrayed in the splendor of full dress, betook themselves on board of the frigate. At midnight, after an evening of dancing and gayety, Lieut. Downes left the "Essex," and returned to his vessel, which immediately weighed anchor and put to sea. The festivities on the frigate continued a little time longer; and then, the last ladies having been handed down the gangway, and pulled ashore, the work of clearing away the decorations began. While the ship's decks were still strewn with flags and flowers, while the awnings still stretched from stem to stern, and the hundreds of gay lanterns still hung in the rigging, the "Essex Junior" was seen coming into the harbor with a signal flying. The signal quartermaster rushed for his book, and soon announced that the flags read, "Two enemy's ships in sight." At this moment more than half the crew of the "Essex" were on shore; but a signal set at the ship's side recalled the men, and in an hour and a half the ship was ready for action; while the "Essex Junior" cast anchor in a supporting position.

The two strange vessels were the "Cherub" and the "Phœbe," British men-of-war. They rounded into the harbor about eight A.M., and bore down towards the American ships. The "Phœbe," the larger of the two Englishmen, drew close to the "Essex;" and her commander, Capt. Hillyar, sprang upon the taffrail, and asked after Capt. Porter's health. Porter responded courteously; and, noticing that the "Phœbe" was coming closer than the customs of war-vessels in a neutral port permitted, warned the Englishman to keep his distance, or trouble would result. Hillyar protested that he meant no harm, but nevertheless continued his advance until the two ships were almost fouled. Porter called the boarders to the bow; and they crowded forward, armed to the teeth, and stripped for the fight. The "Phœbe" was in such a position that she lay entirely at the mercy of the "Essex," and could not bring a gun to bear in her own defence. Hillyar, from his position on the taffrail, could see the American boarders ready to spring at the word of command, and the muzzles of the cannon ready to blow the ship out of water. There is little doubt that he was astonished to find the "Essex" so well prepared for the fray, for he had been told that more than half her crew had gone ashore. Relying upon this information, he had probably planned to capture the "Essex" at her moorings, regardless of the neutrality of the port. But he had now brought himself into a dangerous position, and Porter would have been justified in opening fire at once. But the apologies and protestations of the British captain disarmed him, and he unwisely let the "Phœbe" proceed unmolested.

In his journal, Farragut thus describes this incident: "We were all at quarters, and cleared for action, waiting with breathless anxiety for the command from Capt. Porter to board, when the English captain appeared, standing on the after-gun, in a pea-jacket, and in plain hearing said, —

"'Capt. Hillyar's compliments to Capt. Porter, and hopes he is well.'

"Porter replied, 'Very well, I thank you. But I hope you will not come too near, for fear some accident might take place which would be disagreeable to you.' And, with a wave of his trumpet, the kedge-anchors went up to our yard-arms, ready to grapple the enemy.

"Capt. Hillyar braced back his yards, and remarked to Porter, that, if he did fall aboard him, he begged to assure the captain that it would be entirely accidental.

"'Well,' said Porter, 'you have no business where you are. If you touch a rope-yarn of this ship, I shall board instantly.'"

Notwithstanding Porter's forbearance, the incident came near leading to a battle, through the action of one of the crew, who had come off from shore with his brain rather hazy from heavy drinking. This man was standing by a gun, with a lighted brand in his hand, ready to fire the piece, when he thought he saw an Englishman grinning at him through one of the open ports of the "Phœbe." Highly enraged, he shouted out, "My fine fellow, I'll soon stop your making faces!" and reached out to fire the gun; when a heavy blow from an officer, who saw the action, stretched him on the deck. Had that gun been fired, nothing could have saved the "Phœbe."

The two hostile ships cast anchor within long gun-shot of the Americans, and seemed prepared for a long season in port. For the next few weeks the British and American officers and seamen met frequently on shore; and a kind of friendship sprang up between them, although they were merely waiting for a favorable moment to begin a deadly strife. Some incidents, however, took place which rather disturbed the amicable relations of the two parties. At the masthead of the "Essex" floated a flag bearing the motto, "Free Trade and Sailors' Rights." This flag gave great offence to the British, who soon displayed a flag with the inscription, "God and Country, British Sailors' Best Rights. Traitors offend both." To this Americans responded with, "God, our Country and Liberty. Tyrants offend them." Here the debate closed, and seemed to arouse no unfriendly feeling; for Porter and Hillyar talked it over amicably on shore. In the course of this conversation, Porter challenged the "Phœbe" to meet the "Essex" alone; but Hillyar declined the proposition. Shortly after this, the crews of the hostile ships began the practice of singing songs *at* each other; the Americans beginning with "Yankee Doodle," while the British retorted with "God save the King." Then the poets of the forecastle set to work, and ground out verses that would prove particularly obnoxious to the enemy. One of the American songs recited at full length the capture of the "Guerriere." The character of the poetry may be judged by the first verse.

"Ye tars of our country, who seek on the main
The cause for the wrongs your country sustain,
Rejoice and be merry, for bragging John Bull
Has got a sound drubbing from brave Capt. Hull."

The British responded with triumphant verses upon the capture of the "Chesapeake," news of which had just reached Valparaiso. Their poetry was quite as bad.

"Brave Broke he waved his sword,
And he cried, 'Now, lads, aboard;
And we'll stop their singing,
Yankee Doodle Dandy, O!'"

Porter now wished to get rid of some of the prizes with which he was encumbered. He could not burn them in the harbor, and the British ships kept too close a watch upon him to permit his ships to leave the harbor for an hour: so he was forced to wait many days for an opportunity. On the 14th of February the opportunity came; and the "Hector" was towed out to sea, and set a-fire. Two weeks later, the "Phœbe" came alone to the mouth of the harbor, and, after showing her motto-flag, hove to, and fired a gun to windward. This Porter understood to be a challenge, and he at once put out in the "Essex." But the "Phœbe" had no intention of entering a fair and equal fight; for she quickly joined her consort, and the two then chased the "Essex" back to port. Much talk and a vast deal of correspondence grew out of this affair, which certainly did not redound to the credit of the British.

On the 28th of March the wind blew with such force that the larboard cable of the "Essex" parted; and the ship, drifting before the wind, dragged her starboard cable out to sea. Knowing that the British ships were in waiting outside, Porter lost no time in getting on sail and trying to beat back into the harbor. But, just as the ship was rounding the point, there came up a heavy squall, which carried away the main topmast, throwing several topmen into the sea. In her disabled state the frigate could not regain the harbor; but she ran into a little cove, and anchored within half pistol-shot of the shore. Here she was in neutral waters; and, had Capt. Hillyar been a man of his word, the "Essex" would have been safe: for that officer, on being asked by Porter whether he would respect the neutrality of the port, had replied with much feeling, "You have paid so much respect to the neutrality of the port, that I feel bound in honor to respect it." But he very quickly forgot this respect, when he saw his enemy lying crippled and in his power, although in neutral waters.

Hardly had the "Essex" cast anchor, when the two British ships drew near, their actions plainly showing that they intended to attack the crippled frigate. The "Essex" was prepared for action, the guns beat to quarters; and the men went to their places coolly and bravely, though each felt at his heart that he was going into a hopeless fight. The midshipmen had hardly finished calling over the quarter-lists, to see that every man was at his station, when the roar of the cannon from the British ships announced the opening of the action. The "Phœbe" had taken up a position under the stern of the American frigate, and pounded away with her long eighteens; while the "Essex" could hardly get a gun to bear in return. The "Cherub" tried her fortune on the bow, but was soon driven from that position, and joined her consort. The two kept up a destructive fire, until Porter got three long guns out of the cabin-windows, and drove the enemy away. After repairing damages, the British took up a position just out of range of the "Essex's" carronades, and began a rapid and effective fire from their long eighteens.

Such an action as this was very trying to the crew of the "Essex." The carronades against which Porter had protested when his ship was armed were utterly useless against an enemy who used such cautious tactics. On the deck of the frigate men were falling on every side. One shot entered a port, and killed four men who stood at a gun, taking off the heads of the last two. The crash and roar of the flying shots were incessant. As the guns became crippled for lack of men, the junior officers took a hand in all positions. Farragut writes, "I performed the duty of captain's aid, quarter-gunner, powder-boy, and, in fact, did every thing that was required of me. . . . When my services were not required for other purposes, I generally assisted in working a gun; would run and bring powder from the boys, and send them back for more, until the captain wanted me to carry a message; and this continued to occupy me during the action." Once during the action a midshipman came running up to Porter, and reported that a gunner had deserted his post. Porter's reply was to turn to Farragut (the lad was only twelve years old), and say, "Do your duty, sir." The boy seized a pistol, and ran away to find the coward, and shoot him in his tracks. But the gunner had slipped overboard, and made his way to the shore, and so escaped.

After the "Essex" had for some time suffered from the long-range fire of the enemy, Capt. Porter determined to make sail, and try to close with his foes. The rigging had been so badly shot away that the flying jib was the only sail that could be properly set. With this, and with the other sails hanging loose from the yards, the "Essex" ran down upon the British, and made such lively play with her carronades, that the "Cherub" was forced to haul off for repairs, and the tide of war seemed to be setting in favor of the Americans. But, though the gallant blue-jackets fought with desperation, their chances for success were small. The decks were strewn with dead, the cock-pit was full, and the enemy's shot were constantly adding to the number of dead and dying. Young Farragut, who had been sent below after some gun-primers, was coming up the ladder, when a man standing at the opening of the hatchway was struck full in the face by a cannon-ball, and fell back, carrying the lad with him. The mutilated body fell full upon the boy, who lay for a time unconscious; then, jumping to his feet, ran, covered with blood, to the quarter-deck. Capt. Porter saw him, and asked if he was wounded. "I believe not, sir," answered the midshipman. "Then," said the captain, "where are the primers?" Farragut remembered his errand, and dashed below to execute it. When he emerged the second time, he saw the captain (his adopted father) fall, and running up asked if he was wounded. "I believe not, my son," was the response; "but I felt a blow on the top of my head." He had probably been knocked down by the wind of a passing shot.

But the end of the action was now near. Dreadful havoc had been made in the ranks of both officers and men. The cock-pit would hold no more wounded; and the shots were beginning to penetrate its walls, killing the sufferers waiting for the surgeon's knife. Lieut. McKnight was the only commissioned officer on duty. The ship had been several times on fire, and the magazine was endangered. Finally, the carpenter reported that her bottom was so cut up that she could float but a little while longer. On learning this, Porter gave the order for the colors to be hauled down, which was done. The enemy, however, kept up their deadly fire for ten minutes after the "Essex" had struck.

David Farragut narrates some interesting incidents of the surrender. He was sent by the captain to find and destroy the signal book before the British should come aboard; and, this having been done, he went to the cock-pit to look after his friends. Here he found Lieut. Cornell terribly wounded. When Farragut spoke to him, he said, "O Davy, I fear it's all up with me!" and died soon after. The doctor said, that, had this officer been operated upon an hour before, his life might have been saved; but when the surgeons proposed to drop another man, and attend to him, he replied, "No, no, doctor, none of that. Fair play's a jewel. One man's life is as dear as another's; I would not cheat any poor fellow out of his turn." Surely history nowhere records more noble generosity. Soon after this, when Farragut was standing on the deck, a little negro boy came running up to inquire about his master, Lieut. Wilmer, who had been knocked over by a shot. On learning his master's fate, he leaped over the taffrail into the sea, and was drowned.

After the "Essex" had been formally surrendered, boats were sent to convey the prisoners to the British ships. In one of these Farragut was carried to the "Phœbe," and there fell into a second battle, in which the victory remained with him. "I was so mortified at our capture that I could not refrain from tears," he writes. "While in this uncomfortable state, I was aroused by hearing a young reefer call out, —

"'A prize! a prize! Ho, boys, a fine grunter, by Jove.'

"I saw at once that he had under his arm a pet pig belonging to our ship, called 'Murphy.' I claimed the animal as my own.

"'Ah,' said he, 'but you are a prisoner, and your pig also!'

"'We always respect private property,' I replied; and, as I had seized hold of 'Murphy,' I determined not to let go unless 'compelled by superior force.'

"This was fun for the oldsters, who immediately sung out, —

"'Go it, my little Yankee. If you can thrash Shorty, you can have your pig.'

"'Agreed,' cried I.

"A ring was formed in an open space, and at it we went. I soon found that my antagonist's pugilistic education did not come up to mine. In fact, he was no match for me, and was compelled to give up the pig. So I took Master Murphy under my arm, feeling that I had in some degree wiped out the disgrace of the defeat."

When the British ships with their prize returned to the quiet waters of the harbor, and began to take account of damages, it was found that the "Essex" had indeed fought a losing fight. On the "Phœbe," but four men were killed, and seven wounded; on the "Cherub," one killed and three wounded, made up the list of casualties. But on the "Essex" were fifty-eight killed, and sixty-six wounded; while an immense number of men were missing, who may have escaped to the shore or may have sunk beneath the waves. Certain it is some swimmers reached shore, though sorely wounded. One man had rushed on deck with his clothing all aflame, and swam ashore, though scarcely a square inch could be found on his body which was not burned. Another seaman had sixteen or eighteen scales of iron chipped from the muzzle of his gun driven into his legs, yet he reached the shore in safety.

After some delay, the "Essex Junior" was disarmed; and the prisoners, having given their paroles, were placed on board her, with a letter of safe-conduct from Capt. Hillyar to prevent their capture by any British man-of-war in whose path they might fall. But this letter availed them little; for, after an uneventful voyage to the northward, the "Essex Junior" found herself brought to by a shot from the British frigate "Saturn," off Sandy Hook. The boarding-officer took Capt. Hillyar's letter to the commander of the "Saturn," who remarked that Hillyar had no authority to make any such agreement, and ordered the "Essex Junior" to remain all night under the lee of the British ship. Capt. Porter was highly indignant, and handed his sword to the British officer, saying that he considered himself a prisoner. But the Englishman declined the sword, and was about to return to his ship, when Porter said, "Tell the captain that I am his prisoner, and do not consider myself any longer bound by my contract with Capt. Hillyar, which he has violated; and I shall act accordingly." By this Porter meant that he now considered himself absolved from his parole, and free to escape honorably if an opportunity should offer.

Accordingly at seven o'clock the following morning, a boat was stealthily lowered from the "Essex Junior;" and Porter, descending into it, started for the shore, leaving a message, that, since British officers showed so little regard for each other's honor, he had no desire to trust himself in their hands. The boat had gone some distance before she was sighted by the lookout on the "Saturn," for the hull of the "Essex Junior" hid her from sight. As soon as the flight was noticed, the frigate made sail in chase, and seemed likely to overhaul the audacious fugitives, when a thick fog set in, under cover of which Porter reached Babylon, L.I., nearly sixty miles distant. In the mean time, the "Essex Junior," finding herself hidden from the frigate by the fog-bank, set sail, and made for the mouth of the harbor. She was running some nine knots an hour when the fog showed signs of lifting; and she came up into the wind, that the suspicion of the British might not be aroused As it happened, the "Saturn" was close alongside when the fog lifted, and her boat soon came to the American ship. An officer, evidently very irate, bounded upon the deck, and said brusquely, —

"You must have been drifting very fast. We have been making nine knots an hour, and yet here you are alongside."

"So it appears," responded the American lieutenant coolly.

"We saw a boat leave you, some time ago," continued the Englishman. "I suppose Capt. Porter went in it?"

"Yes. You are quite right."

"And probably more of you will run away, unless I cut away your boats from the davits."

"Perhaps that would be a good plan for you to adopt."

"And I would do it very quickly, if the question rested with me."

"You infernal puppy," shouted the American officer, now thoroughly aroused, "if you have any duty to do, do it; but, if you insult me further, I'll throw you overboard!"

With a few inarticulate sounds, the Englishman stepped into his boat, and was pulled back to the "Saturn," whence soon returned a second boat, bearing an apology for the boarding-officer's rudeness. The boarders then searched all parts of the ship, mustered her crew on the plea that it contained British deserters, and finally released her, after having inflicted every possible humiliation upon her officers. The "Essex Junior" then proceeded to New York, where she was soon joined by Capt. Porter. The whole country united in doing honor to the officers, overlooking the defeat which closed their cruise, and regarding only the persistent bravery with which they had upheld the cause of the United States in the far-off waters of the Pacific.

Before closing the account of Porter's famous cruise, the story of the ill-fortune which befell Lieut. Gamble should be related. This officer, it will be remembered, was left at Nookaheevah with the prizes "Greenwich," "Seringapatam," and "Hammond." Hardly had the frigate disappeared below the horizon, when the natives began to grow unruly; and Gamble was forced to lead several armed expeditions against them. Then the sailors under his charge began to show signs of mutiny. He found himself almost without means of enforcing his authority, and the disaffection spread daily. The natives, incited by the half-savage Englishman who had been found upon the island, began to make depredations upon the live-stock; while the women would swim out to the ships by night, and purloin bread, aided by their lovers among the crews. To the lieutenant's remonstrances, the natives replied that "Opotee" was not coming back, and they would do as they chose; while the sailors heard his orders with ill-concealed contempt, and made but a pretext of obeying them. In the middle of April three sailors stole a boat from the "Greenwich," and, stocking it well with ammunition and provisions, deserted, and were never again seen. One month later, mutiny broke out in its worst form. Lieut Gamble and his two midshipmen, being upon the "Seringapatam," were knocked down by the sailors, gagged, bound, and thrust into the hold The mutineers then went ashore, spiked the guns in the fort, and then, hoisting the British colors over the captured ship, set sail. Lieut. Gamble was badly wounded in the foot by a pistol-shot fired by one of his guards. Notwithstanding his wound, he, with the two lieutenants and two loyal seamen, was turned adrift in an open boat. After long and painful exertions, they reached the shore, and returned to the bay, where the "Greenwich" still lay at anchor. The mutineers, thirteen of whom were Englishmen who had enlisted in the American service, steered boldly out to sea, and were nevermore heard of. The half-savage Englishman, Wilson, was supposed to be at the bottom of this uprising, and some days later a boat's crew from the "Greenwich" went ashore to capture him. Soon after, Gamble, anxiously watching the shore, saw a struggle upon the beach, the natives rushing down on all sides, the boat overturned in the surf, and two white men swimming towards the ship, making signals of distress. Mr. Clapp, with two men, sprang into a boat, and put off to the aid of the swimmers, leaving Gamble alone on the ship. Two large canoes loaded with savages then left the beach, and swiftly bore down towards the "Essex;" but Gamble, lamed though he was, seized a lighted brand, and hobbled along the deck of the ship, firing her guns with such effect that the savages were driven back, the beach cleared, and Mr. Clapp enabled to save the two struggling men. When the boat returned to the ship, it was learned that Midshipman Feltus and five men had been basely murdered by the savages. There were now left but seven Americans; and of these but two were well, and fit for duty. Setting the "Greenwich" on fire, this little band boarded the "Hammond," and made their way to sea. But between the Sandwich Islands and Honolulu they fell in with the "Cherub," by whom they were captured, and kept prisoners for nine months, when, peace being declared, they were released.

So ended the last incident of the gallant cruise of the "Essex." History has few more adventurous tales to relate.

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